















### GLAD TIDINGS

TO

# PERISHING SINNERS,

OR,

#### THE GENUINE GOSPEL

A COMPLETE WARRANT

FOR THE

### UNGODLY TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.

Nothing is requisite, in order to a participation of Christ and his benefits, but a grant from God.

MR. J. HERVEY.

God justifieth the Ungodly. This is that expression which hath stirred up so much wrath among many, and on account whereof some seem to be much displeased with the apostle himself.

Dr. J. Owen.

BY Rev. ABRAHAM EOOTH.

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### PREFACE.

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THAT the subject here discussed is of sufficient importance to demand serious attention, whether the principle defended be true or false, must be admitted by every competent judge; because of its intimate connection with the doctrine of justification before God; for that has ever been considered, by our most eminent Protestant writers, both Lutherans and Calvinists, Thus, for inas an article of the greatest moment. stance, Dr. John Owen: —"In my judgment, LUTHER spake the truth when he said, To lose the article of Justification, would at once be the loss of the whole Christian faith. And I wish he had not been a true prophet, when he foretold that, in the following ages, the doctrine hereof would be again obscured."\* The leading principle maintained in this publication, is closely connected also, with Christian experience, with devotional practice, and with general obedience to God. The better that principle is understood, and the more its practical influence is felt; the more benign will its genuine tendency appear, with regard to peace of conscience, and liberty in devotional duties; to the habitual exercise of holy affections, and a course of conformity to the divine commands. It is, by the author at least, considered in this light.

That prudence and caution are necessary, however, in stating and defending the sentiment here adopted, the writer presumes, will be acknowledged: because it is a kind of *middle point*, between Arminianism, and

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<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of justification. General considerations, p. 103. Glasgow 1760. Thus, also, that celebrated foreigner, Witsius: "Diffundit se justificationis doctrina pertotum theologiæ corpus, et prout fundamenta hic, vel bene, vel male, jacta sunt, eo uni versum ædificium vel solidius augustiusque a scendit, vel male statuminatum fædam minitatur ruinam." Oecon. Foed Lib. III Cap. viii § 1.

Antinomianism—between seeeing acceptance with God, as it were, by the works of the law;\* and renouncing obedience to the divine precepts, as if they had lost their obliging power, or as if our personal obedience were of no importance in any respect. the former of which is pernicious legality; the latter, destructive licentiousness. Whether the writer have handled the subject with all that wisdom and care, which its delicacy and importance demand, he dares not assert: but, with sincerity he can declare, that the discussion of it has been attended with much thought, and with fre-

quent prayer.

Though the author detest the real principles of what is properly called Antinomianism; though, many years ago, in the most public manner, he labored to explode those pernicious principles; † and though, in the present performance, he have endeavored to guard against being misunderstood; yet he is not without suspicion, that some of his readers will be ready to consider the main position defended, as having a licentious cast. But, should that be the case, he is prepared for it, so as to be neither offended, nor surprised. Nay, while fully persuaded that there is no just ground for such a conclusion, he will consider it as a presumption in favor of the point maintained. Because it is evident, that the the doctrine of grace, as preached and recorded by Paul, was treated in a similar manner. He has long been of opinion, that whoever exhibits the true glory of divine grace, and the high importance of Christian duty, according to the apostolic pattern; will be considered by many as an Antinomian, and by some as an Arminian. Does a minister of the gospel display the absolute freeness, the infinite riches, and the allsuf-ficiency of that grace which is revealed in Jesus Christ, as an immediate ground of encouragement for the vilest

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. ix 32.

<sup>†</sup> See the death of Legal Hope, the Life of evangelical obedience, Sect. VII. Edit. 3d.

<sup>‡</sup> Rom. iii 8, 31. vi 1, 2 3, 15. ix. 14-24.

of sinners to confide in him? the doctrine will be stigmatized by multitudes, as manifestly licentious. Does he, as ministerial duty requires, warmly insist, that, be the professed articles of any one's theological creed ever so scriptural; yet, if he be not habitually mindful of the divine precepts; if he keep not the example of Christ in view; if his heart have not an heavenly turn; he is a stranger to the power of evangelical truth, and unworthy to be called a Christian? his preaching will be offensive to the mere formalist; be censured as uncharitable; and reproached, by some, as detestably legal.

The grand principle here defended, is far from being novel; it having been adopted by many Protestant writers of high reputation in the churches of Christ; from some of whom, and especially from Dr. John Owen, a number of quotations appear in the following work. To the producing of which quotations the author was induced, partly for the sake of that argument which they contain, in proof of his main point; and partly to evince, that the sentiments here maintained have been espoused by persons of the first eminence, among pro-

fessed Christians of Calvinistic principles.

That the number of quotations, from the most respectable Calvinistic authors, with regard to the leading position, might have been greatly increased; every one, much acquainted with their theological writings, must acknowledge. Mr. DAVID WILSON, when vindicating various writers, denominated POPULAR PREACHERS, against the attacks of gross misrepresentation, of illiberal censure, and of sarcastical contempt; in speaking relative to the main subject of the following pages, says: "They [the Popular Preachers] were very ready to acknowledge, that those who are most punctual in the external performance of religious duties, are frequently in a far more dangerous condition than publicans and harlots, or those who lead the most wicked and flagitious lives; because, through the corruption of their own hearts, all their duties, religious services, en-

deavors and attainments, are too often made subservient to the gratification of their pride, and the cherishing of those presumptuous hopes and imaginations whereby they are hardened in their opposition to the true grace of God manifested in the gospel. And they were equally ready to own, that the sovereign mercy of God, with regard to believers at first conversion, does still prevent every good action, motion, or qualification in them; every thing that can be supposed to have the least tendency to qualify them for the divine approbation. They affirmed, that the foundation of a sinner's confidence and comfort lies, not in any good works performed by him; in any consciousness of his own sincerity; or any experience of a gracious and sanctifying work of the divine spirit upon his own soul; but wholly without him, in the promises and testimony of God in the gospel. To maintain, that sinners are justified freely, through the righteousness of Christ imputed, and apprehended by faith alone; and yet assert, that no man has a sufficient warrant to rely upon that righteousness alone for justification—as exhibited in the word of the gospel, till he is first conscious of his own godliness and sincerity; is in effect to affirm that, though sinners in general must be justified freely by grace, through the imputed righteousness; yet no sinner in particular ought, or has any warrant to believe, that he is, or ever can be justified in that manner, or without a righteousness of his own; or, at least, some thing in and about himself, upon which he may with safety bottom an assurance of the divine favor, and his own justification and salvation."\*

Though the author be fully persuaded, that a denial of the position maintained, is inconsistent with the genuine gospel, and with those principles on which every truly pious man proceeds in his prayers, respecting acceptance with God; yet he is far from concluding, that

<sup>\*</sup> Palœmon's Creed Reviewed and Examined, Vol. 1. pp. 195, 196. Vel. II pp. 102, 100.

no one is a real disciple of Christ, who does not explicitly avow that position. For he has learned, from experience and observation, that persons will sometimes dispute against a particular sentiment, the truth of which is habitually implied in their prayers, and its importance tacitly acknowledged in their own experience. To this effect is the following language of Dr. Owen, respecting certain opposers of the doctrine of justification merely by grace, through an imputed righteousness: "I doubt they oftentimes dispute themselves beyond what they can well abide by, when they return home unto a sedate meditation of the state of things between God and their own souls. I had rather learn what some men really judge about their own justification, from their prayers, than their writings. Nor do I remember, that I did ever hear any good man in his prayers, use any expressions about justification, pardon of sin, and righteousness before God, wherein any plea, from any thing in ourselves, was introduced, or made use of. Whereas we may, and ought, to represent unto God in our supplications, our faith, or what it is that we believe herein; I much question, whether some men can find in their hearts to pray over and plead before him, all the arguments and distinctions they make use of to prove the interest of our works and obedience in our justification before him; or enter into judgment with him, upon the conclusions which they make from them. I judge no men upon the expressions that fall from them in polemical writings; wherein, on many occasions, they do affront their own experience, and contradict their own prayers. To believe the doctrine of [justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, or not to believe it, as thus or thus explained, is one thing; and to enjoy the thing, or not enjoy it is another. I no way doubt, but that many men do receive more grace from God, than they understand, or will own; and have a greater efficacy of it in them, than they will believe."\*

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, p. 8, 19, 20, 62, 278, 279. Glasgow Edit.

That no plausible reasons may be advanced, in opposition to this main thesis, the author does not suppose. But, as the writer just quoted observes; "It is a known rule, that a truth, well established and confirmed, is not to be questioned, much less relinquished, on every entangling sophism, though it should appear insoluble."\*

Goodman's Fields, London, May 17, 1796.

\* Ut supra, p 457.

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### GLAD TIDINGS

TO

## PERISHING SINNERS, &c.

#### INTRODUCTION.

WHETHER any holy disposition in the heart of a sinner be previously necessary to warrant his believing in Jesus Christ? Or, whether, for that purpose, the gospel itself, detached from every consideration of a preparatory sanctifying influence, be completely sufficient? are questions on which the ministers of religion, and the professors of godliness, are greatly divided. The former sentiment is charged, by some, with Arminian legality: the latter, by multitudes, with Antinomian licentiousness. That is discarded, as fostering pharisaical pride, as veiling the glory of sovereign grace, and as corrupting the gospel of Jesus Christ. detested, as encouraging presumptuous hope, as inimical to true virtue, and as averse to supreme authority, expressing itself in divine law. So opposite are the views of professed Christians, relative to this momentous article of our inquiry!

After much thought on the subject, I cannot but conclude, however, That the genuine gospel is a complete warrant for the most ungodly person to believe in Jesus; and that no degree of holiness is necessary for that purpose. This position though treated by great numbers as a licentious principle, and as pregnant with dangerous consequences, I consider as a capital article of revealed truth, and as essential to the genuine gospel. I adopt it, as expressing an important fact, in

which the perfection of our Lord's vicarious work, the honor of divine grace, and the peace of distressed consciences, are deeply concerned: to the proof and illustration of which, the following pages are devoted.

To prevent mistakes it is proper to be observed, that, by an holy disposition is not meant, a speculative knowledge of religious duty; a conviction of spiritual danger; or a desire of immortal happiness: for these, though they accompany, do none of them come under the notion of an holy disposition. These may all exist, more or less, in the minds, the consciences, and the hearts of sinners, without any principle of true sanctity. But, by an holy disposition is intended, a bias of the will, a propensity of the heart, or a tendency of the affections, in favour of divine authority, and of conformity to the divine image. By believing in Jesus Christ, I do not mean a firm persuasion of his being the promised Messiah, and that the Christian religion is from God, though that persuasion be presupposed; nor a mere assent to any particular proposition, however true, or important; nor yet an assurance of personal interest in Christ, as the only Saviour of sinners: but relying upon him as revealed in the doctrine of grace, for pardon, peace, and every spiritual blessing.

Again: The question is not, whether sanctifying influence, and real holiness, be previously necessary to final felicity? for that is admitted in its fullest sense. Partly, because without holiness no one shall see the Lord; and partly, because without holiness, intellectual happiness is impossible. Neither is the inquiry, whether a pious turn of heart be necessary to communion with God, in the performance of devotional services? for that communion, on the part of a Christian, is nothing else but the exercise of holy affections toward God, as manifesting himself in Jesus Christ.—Nor, whether an holy tendency in the will be necessary, as an evidence of our having already believed in Jesus? for that is cheerfully granted.—Nor, yet, whether a divine influence, attending evangelical truth, be necessary to a siner's believing in Christ? for that is an important

article of the Christian faith. But the question to be discussed, is; Whether the Gospel itself be a complete warrant for the most ungodly person to believe in Jesus, without any holy disposition being necessary for that

purpose?

By the term gospel I here intend, the doctrine of salvation by grace, through Jesus Christ: which doctrine is, in the most emphatical sense, good news, or glad tidings; agreeable to the natural import of the word evarytexion, as used by the Evangelists and Apostles. Relative to which particular, I will here introduce a few extracts from Dr. GEORGE CAMPBELL. Thus, that learned author :- "This term, (το εναγγελιον) agreeably to its etymology, from ev bene and ayyema nuncium, always in classical use, where it occurs but rarely, denotes either good news, or the reward given to the bearer of good news. The Greek verb ευαγγελιζω, when first used by the Evangelists, conveyed to their countrymen only one and the same idea, which is precisely what the phrase to bring good tidings conveys to us. The appropriation of the word to the religious institution called the gospel, is of later date, and has gradually arisen out of the former usage. When etymology and use perfectly coincide, we cannot be too literal in our interpretations; when they differ, which does not seldom happen, the latter is to be followed, and not the former. The first meaning of the word (ευαγγελιου) then in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, is, as has been observed, good news; a signification which, though always implied, is not always what is chiefly intended: and therefore the word cannot, without a sacrifice of propriety, be uniformly so rendered. The name, from being expressive of an eminent quality in the dispensation introduced by the Messiah, and from being most frequently applied to it, came gradually to serve as a name for the dispensation itself. When it is thus employed, it is in our tongue properly rendered gospel. This (literal and primitive) sense ought to be retained in the version, when the word, ευαγγελιον, is con-

strued with a noun serving to limit or explain its nature; as το ευμγγελιον της ειρηνης, the good news of peace; το ευαγγελιον της βασιλειας, the good news of the reign. It was observed, on the explanation of the word Bagineia that the Christian economy was foretold under the de-nomination of the reign of God, and the reign of Heaven; and I may add, in the typical language of the Psalms, the reign of David-To εναγγελιον της χαριτος του Θεου is the good news of the favor of God: το ευαγγελιου της σωτηρίας υμων the good news of your salvation. The words in the common version, the gospel of your salvation, are mere words, and convey no meaning to English ears. The word always may, and commonly should, be rendered good news, and not gospel,-when it is construed with znpvoow, I proclaim or publish—(the word) επρυσσειν, rendered to preach, is derived from κηρυξ, rendered preacher; whence also χηρυγμα, rendered a preaching. The primitive χηρυξ signifies properly both herald and common crier—the verb κηρυσσειν, is accordingly to cry, publish, or proclaim authoritatively, or by commission from another, and the noun πηρυγμα, is the thing published or proclaimed. The verb zηρυσσω occurs in the New Testament about five and twenty times, always in nearly the same sense: 1 proclaim, prædico, palam annuncio. This may be called the primitive sense of the word; and in this sense it will be found to be oftenest employed in the New Testament. Though announcing publicly the reign of the Messiah, comes always under the denomination, 27 pvoosew, no moral instructions, or doctrinal explanations, given either by our Lord, or by his Apostles, are ever, either in the Gospels, or in the Acts, so denominated. Let it be also observed that, in all the quotations in the Gospels, from the ancient Prophets, neither the word κηρυσσω, nor any of its conjugates, is applied to any of them beside Jonah. What is quoted from the rest, is said to have been spoken, or foretold, or prophesied, but never preached. Jonah's prophecy to the Ninevites, on the contrary, is but twice quoted; and it is in both places

called \*ηρυγμα, rendered preaching, properly cry, or proclamation. It was a real proclamation which God required him to make through the streets of Nineveh."\*

The gospel then, is good news, or glad tidings. It is that most interesting part of sacred Scripture which

is, by inspired writers, denominated THE TRUTH—the word of the kingdom—the word of God's grace—the word of reconciliation—the word of righteousness—the word of life—the word of salvation—glad tidings of the kingdom, or of the reign—glad tidings of the kingdom, or of the reign—glad tidings of Christ—glad tidings of the grace of God—glad tidings of peace—glad tidings of salvation—the doctrine of God our Saviour—the glorious glad tidings of Christ—and the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God.† It is denominated, the word of faith—the faith once delivered to the grapt the gracet below faith—and the glorious glad to the grapt the grapt below faith—and the grapt the graph the grapt the gra denominated, the word of faith—the faith once delivered to the saints—the most holy faith—and the faith in Christ.‡ The publication of the gospel, by the Apostles, is called, preaching, or proclaiming Christ—proclaiming Christ crucified—preaching the cross—proclaiming peace, by Jesus Christ—proclaiming forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ—bringing glad tidings of peace—and bringing glad tidings of good things. || Such is the gospel, and such the preaching of it, as represented by the inspired writers! which unite in the general notion of JOYFUL NEWS.

Let us now see how an ancient ecclesiastical author describes it. Thus Chrysostom speaks, as quoted and translanted by Mr. Hervey. "The gospel comprehends, a discharge from punishment; a remission of sins; the gift of righteousness; the endowment of sanc-tification; redemption from every evil; the adoption of sons; the inheritance of heaven; and a most endear-

<sup>\*</sup> The four Gospels, Vol. I. Dissertat. V. Part i. § 1, 8, 10, 11, 16. Part V. \$ 2, 7, 8.

<sup>†</sup> Gal. iii, 1. Matt. xiii, 19. Acts xx. 32. 2. Cor. v. 19. Heb. 1. 13. Philip. ii. 16. Acts xiii. 26. Matt. iv, 23. Rom. i. t, 16. Acts xx. 24. Eph. vi. 15. i. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 4. 1 Tim. i. 11. Titus ii. 10.

<sup>‡</sup> Rom. x, 8. Jude 3. 20. Acts xxiv. 24. # Acts viii. 5. 1 Cor. i 18, 23. Acts x. 36. xiii. 38. Eph. iii 8. Rom. x. 15.

ed, a conjugal relation to the infinitely majestic Son of God. All these divinely precious privileges preached, presented, vouchsafed, to the foolish, to the disobedient, to enemies."\* "The gospel," says LUTHER, "is the doctrine concerning the incarnate Son of God, who was given to us, without our deserts, for peace and salvation. It is the word of salvation, the word of grace, the word of comfort, and the word of joy."†

salvation. It is the word of salvation, the word of grace, the word of comfort, and the word of joy."†

The gospel, then, properly and strictly so called, is the doctrine of divine grace. As such, it is contradistinguished to the precepts and prohibitions of divine law, which are the doctrine of human duty. But, relative to this distinction, and the contrasted light in which the law and the gospel are placed by it, the following quotation from Witsius may not be improper. Thus that eminent writer:-" The law, here, denotes that part of the divine word which consists of precepts and prohibitions; with the promise of a reward to be conferred on those who obey, and a threatening of punishment on the disobedient. The gospel signifies the doctrine of grace, and of complete salvation in Jesus Christ, which elect sinners shall receive by faith. Every prescription, therefore, of virtues and of duties; all exhortations and dehortations; all reproofs and threatenings; all promises, likewise, of reward to perfect obedience, belong to the law. To the gospel pertains every thing that can minister hope of salvation to sinful man: that is, the doctrine of the person, the offices, the states, the benefits of Jesus Christ; and all promises to which are annexed the pardon of sin, and the possession of grace and of glory, to be obtained by faith in Christ. This is the most strict notion of each word; to which, through the whole of this disputation, regard must be paid. If we understand the word gospel strictly, as it is the formula of the Testament of Grace, which consists of mere promises, or an abso-

Theron and Aspasio, Vol. III. p. 321. Edit. 5th.
 Loci Communes, Class II. Loc. xiv. p. 69. Londini, 1651.

lute exhibition of salvation in Christ; then, properly speaking, it prescribes nothing as duty; requires nothing; commands nothing: no, not even believe, trust, hope in the Lord, and such like. But it reports, declares, and signifies to us, what God in Christ promises; what he will do, and is about to perform. All prescription of duty belongs to the law; as, after others, the venerable Voetius has excellently well proved. This must by all means be held, if, with all the reformed, we would steadily defend the perfection of the law, as including all virtues, and all the duties of holiness."\*
This distinction between the law and the gospel, strictly understood, appearing to be both just and important, is regarded in the following pages.

Still further, however, to confirm and illustrate the necessity of keeping this distinction in view, it may be observed; that the law of God originated in his relation to men, as moral agents; and in his necessary dominion over them, of which it is a natural expression: but the gospel, in his royal, supreme prerogative; it being the result of his mere, sovereign pleasure. The former considers them as rational creatures that are bound to obey: the *latter*, as guilty creatures, who deserve to suffer. The precepts of divine *law* are the language of stern authority: the doctrines of the *gospel* are the voice of condescending mercy. In that, justice unsheaths the sword, and demands vengeance: in this, mercy exhibits pardon, and proclaims peace. Divine law, is the awful ministration of death, † as the desert of sin: the everlasting gospel is the good news of life, as the effect of boundless grace. That by a righteous charge of guilt, and of deserved ruin, stops the mouth: † this, by proclaiming a free pardon, opens the lips in gratitude and praise. God, in the law, addresses men agreeably to their personal deserts, their character, and their state: in the grand according to the riches of their state: in the gospel, according to the riches of his own grace, the diversity of their spiritual wants, and

<sup>\*</sup> Animadvers. Iren. C. xv. § 1, 9.

<sup>† 2</sup> Cor. iii. 7: ‡ Rom. iii. 19.

the vicarious work of Jesus Christ. In divine law, the Most High exhibits himself, as invested with absolute dominion, as flaming with eternal purity, and as unchangeably abhorrent of moral evil: in the gospel, as condemning sin in the flesh of his own incarnate Son; as pardoning iniquity, in its greatly diversified forms; as justifying the ungodly; as the just God and the

SAVIOUR.

Hence it appears, that, in addressing sinners, respecting their immortal concerns, neither the announcing of danger, nor the enforcing of duty, is publishing the gospel, properly so called. Because it is admitted by all, who are conversant in these things, that ευαγγελιον, gospel, denotes glad tidings. Such is its natural and proper, its delightful and emphatical meaning. It is most commonly employed, in the New Testament, with an immediate reference to the grace of God, and the work of Christ, as they appear in the salvation of sinners. Very seldom is it used by the Apostles, to denote the Christian system at large; but, with a few exceptions, in its grand, appropriate, and emphatical sense, for that part of revealed truth which respects the blessings of salvation, by mere grace, through Jesus Christ. Preaching the gospel, therefore, is proclaiming glad tidings of salvation for the guilty, the unworthy, and the perishing.

Now, the terms law, precepts, commands, exhortations, threatenings, and others of a similar kind, are expressions of an extremely different meaning, from that of the word gospel. To assert, therefore, the authority of God in his laws, whether moral or positive; to describe the awful situation of unregenerate sinners? to warn them of their extreme danger; to inculcate, for suitable purposes, an impartial regard to all the divine precepts; and to insist, that an habitual want of obedience to the known commands of Christ, leaves a person destitute of evidence that he either loves him,

<sup>\*</sup> Rom· viii. 3.

t Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Rom: iv. 5. Isaiah xiv. 21.

or believes in him; though of essential importance, in the course of a public ministry, ought never to be considered, strictly speaking, as preaching the gospel. It may be all true; it may be all proper; it may be all necessary in its place; and yet, not having the nature of glad tidings in it, be very different from

the gospel.

The word gospel, having long been commonly used without any determinate meaning; except, either a denoting the Christian system, or some doctrine, or precept, pertaining to Christianity; and having become, by modern use, a kind of technical term in divinity; is applied, in the most promiscuous manner, to all sorts of religious doctrine, that are considered by their abettors as warranted in the sacred writings. The public minister, and the private professor, whatever their theological creed may be; are equally pleased with concluding, that the one preaches, and the other hears, the gospel: though, frequently, neither of them have any fixed or distinct notion under the term; and even though their views of Christianity render it nearly akin to Deism. It were to be wished, therefore, either that, instead of the old Saxon word gospel, the expression, glad tidings, had been used in our vulgar translation of the New Testament; or that the former term were universally understood in its original sense, as denoting good news. For, were that the case, it is highly probable, there would be more knowledge, and less of self-deception; relative to this momentous affair.

### CHAPTER I.

THE GENUINE GOSPEL A COMPLETE WARRANT FOR THE MOST UNGODLY PERSON TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.

To prove this position, a great number of passages might be extracted from the sacred records; a variety of which, as being more directly to the purpose, and expressing kindred ideas, I will here produce under the following arrangement of particulars.

The condescending and gracious characters which Christ bears. "The Mediator between God and men—The Surety of a better testament—A great High

Priest-The good Shepherd-The Saviour."\*

The great and merciful design of our Lord in becoming incarnate. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world—the Son of Man is come to seek and to save—he shall save his people."†

The character and state of those whom our Lord came to save. "Sinners—the ungodly—enemies to God—the dead in sin—the children of wrath—the accursed—

the lost."‡

The work which Christ performed, the sufferings he underwent, and the benefits to sinners thence resulting. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him—he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—Christ our passover is sacrificed for us—Christ died for our sins—we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins—

<sup>\* 1</sup> Tim. ii. 5. Heb. vii. 22 iv. 14. John x. 10. 2 Tim. i. 11.

<sup>† 1</sup> John iv. 14. Luke xix. 10. Matt. i. 21.

<sup>\* 1</sup> Tim. i. 15. Rom. v. 5, 8, 10. Eph. ii. 1, 3. Gal. iii. 10, 13. Luke xix. 10.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—whom God hath set forth to be a propitation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus—when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son—Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him—by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous—Jesus, who of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."\*

This testimony of God, respecting the gracious characters which Christ bears; the merciful design of his appearance in the world; the state of those whom he came to save; and the work which he performed for that purpose; very strongly encourages the guilty, the ungodly, and the altogether unworthy, to believe in Jesus. For, as it is manifest that he did not assume his condescending and mediatorial characters, come into the world, and expire on a cross, to save the innocent, or the righteous, but sinners—the ungodly—the justly accursed; so individuals of that description must be the only persons with whom, as a saviour from eternal

ruin, he has any concern.

The all sufficiency of Christ, of his work, and of Divine grace, to save the most ungodly wretch that lives. "This is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS—the MIGHTY GOD—look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God; and there is none else—neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through

<sup>\* 2</sup> Cor. v. 21. Isa. liii. 5. 6 1. Pet. ii. 24. 1. Cor. v. 7 xv. 3. Col. i. 14. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. iii. 25, 26. v. 10. 1. Pet. iii. 18. Rom. v. 9, 19. 1. Cor. i. 30.

the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. The judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ-he is able to save them to the UTTER-MOST that come unto God by him-the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth from all sin-though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool-all manner of sin and blasphemy (except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,) shall be forgiven unto men.— Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us-he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us—by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified—ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.\*

Who, now, that maturely considers these infallible attestations to the dignity of our Lord's person, the perfection of his obedience, the depth of his penal sufferings, the vicarious nature of his whole work, and the exuberance of divine grace; can doubt the sufficiency, either of Christ or of grace, to save the most vile and miserable of men? Or who, being satisfied of that fact, can forbear to view it as a delightful and powerful encouragement, for the ungodly to believe in Jesus?

Preventing mercy, and the free pardon of enormous offenders. "I was found of them that sought me not;

<sup>\*</sup> Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. ix. 6 xiv. 22. Acts iv. 12. Heb. ix. 14. Rom. v. 15. 16. 17. Heb. vii. 25, 1. John i. 7. Isa. i. 18. Matt. xii. 31. Rom. viii. 34. Heb. ix. 12. x 14. Col. ii. 10.

I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have (κατελαβε) received righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. There was a man named Zaccheus, who was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and he could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth. and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners\*."

What a wonderful exhibition is here, of sovereign, free, and all sufficient mercy! It extends to the most carnal and covetous, the most ungrateful and worthless of men. It precedes every good motion of their wills, and every virtuous affection of their hearts. It waits, neither for any reformation of exterior conduct, nor the least melioration of internal character. It finds

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. x. 20. ix. 30. Luke, xix 2-6. Isa, xliii, 22-25. lvii. 17. 18.

them under the power of strong disaffection to God, and with the gain of extortion in their iniquitous hands. Fraught with every spiritual blessing for those who deserve to perish, it pardons their crimson crimes, and softens their obdurate hearts. It gives a new turn to their wills, and elevates their affections to holy objects. It fills them with spiritual comfort, directs their feet into the way of righteousness, and makes them new creatures. Such divinely gracious declarations, and well authenticated facts, must, therefore, warrant the most ungodly person to regard this unparalleled mercy, and to believe in Jesus Christ.

The sovereignty, the riches, and the plenitude of divine goodness, revealed to sinners under the notions of love, of mercy, and of grace. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion-even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight-I beseech thee show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy-and Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONG SUFFERING, ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH; KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS, FORGIVING INI-QUITY, AND TRANSGRESSION, AND SIN. Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you. God is love .- Behold, what manner of love, the Father hath bestowed upon us !-- God so loved the world, that he gave his only beggotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? God COMMENDETH his love toward us, in that, while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us. How excellent is thy loving kindness O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us—According to his abundant mercy—They who receive abundance of grace. Where sin abounded, grace did MUCH MORE ABOUND: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace Reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord—The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant—to the praise of the glory of his grace—that, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace\*."

With what an air of supreme authority, and of absolute dominion, does THE ETERNAL here speak! He manifestly considers himself as acting quite in character, when exercising, or withholding mercy, according to his own sovereign pleasure. He neither does, nor can consider himself as a debtor to any man. The whole of our species, being immersed in guilt, and obnoxious to ruin, equally lie at divine mercy, for all their happiness and all their hope. But, while maintaining the dignity of his character, and the supremacy of his own will, in the bestowment of spiritual blessings on guilty creatures; he reveals his goodness in the most encouraging manner: which goodness, expressed under the different notions of love, of mercy, and of grace, he represents as an essential part of that divine glory, which, to the ancient Jewish church, was denoted by the sublimest of all names, JEHOVAH. His Love is here described and celebrated, as ardent—excellent— With what an air of supreme authority, and of absohere described and celebrated, as ardent—excellent—wonderful: nay, he himself seems to delight in its peerless excellence; for he not only manifests, but RECOMMENDS it, in the death of his own Son, to sinners. His

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. ix. 15. Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, xxxiv. 6, 7. John iii. 16. 1. John iv. 10. Rom. viii. 32. v. 8. Psalm xxxvi. 7. Eph. i. 7. ii. 4. 1 Pet. i. 3. Rom, v. 17, 20, 21. 1 Tim. i. 14. Eph. i. 6. ii. 7.

MERCY, as rich—plenteous—abundant. His GRACE as rich—exceedingly rich—abundant—superabundant—exceedingly abundant—and reigning. Surely, then, his love, his mercy, and his grace, being thus revealed in sacred Scripture, and thus commended to sinful, miserable, unworthy creatures; the ungodly must be completely authorised to believe in Jesus. For what are this inference, and the preceding premises, taken together, but saying with David—How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! THEREFORE the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thu wings?

men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings?
The sparing and pardoning mercy of God, beyond all parallel, and all praise. "My people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim: FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God COMMEN-DETH his love toward us, in that, while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will ABUNDANTLY PARDON. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are MY ways higher than YOUR ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he DELIGH-TETH in mercy. He will turn again, he will have com-passion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea\*."

<sup>\*</sup> Hosea xi. 7, 8, 9. Rom, v, 7, 8. Isa. Iv, 7, 8, 9. Micah vii. 18, 19.

So numerous are our offences, and so violent our provocations, that, were not the blessed God equally superior to us in goodness, as he is in power; and in pardoning mercy, as he is in wisdom; we could not have the least ground of hope. Among men, when a breach of private friendship has taken place, the aggressor, being conscious of the injury which he has done, is commonly very backward to admit, that the aggrieved party has any benevolence for him. Thus it is with sinners, when their consciences are awakened, in regard to God. Extremely backward, they are to admit, that there is Extremely backward they are to admit, that there is forgiveness with God, for such aggravated crimes as theirs. To relieve the distressed soul, by obviating this theirs. To relieve the distressed soul, by obviating this very common and pressing difficulty, the Great Sovereign condescends, in the passages before us, tacitly to admit, that, were he like us, neither pardoning nor sparing mercy would ever be exercised toward any of Adam's offspring. But he is GOD, and not man. His thoughts, relative to pardoning mercy, are not our thoughts; nor his ways, respecting that important affair, like our ways. Offences, comparable to a debt of only fifty pence, are often with difficulty forgiven by us; while he, through the blood of atonement, freely obliterates a debt of tenthousand talents. Among mortals, it is an instance of love extremely rare, that any one should lay down his life, even for a good man, or a public benefactor; but God recommends his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, and his enemies, he sent that, while we were yet sinners, and his enemies, he sent his own son to die for us. Far from regulating the manifestations of his compassion, according to the puny instances of human kindness; he not only blesses, but astonishes, by the displays of his matchless favor to to sinners. Yes, God is Love; and, therefore, he delighteth in mercy. What, then, could be more encouraging; or, what, by necessary consequence, could more strongly authorise, a guilty, ungodly, perishing wretch, to rely on the Lord Jesus, in whom this boundless mercy is manifested?

On this delightful and important subject, Dr. Owen expresses himself as follows:—" This forgiveness that is with God, is such as becomes him; such as is suitable to his greatness, goodness, and all other excellencies of his nature; such as that therein he will be known to be Gon. What he says concerning some of the works of his providence, be still, and know that I am GoD: may be much more said concerning this great effect of his grace; still your souls, and know that he is God. It is not like that narrow, difficult, halving, and manacled forgiveness that is found among men, when any such thing is found amongst them. But it is full, free, bottomless, boundless, absolute; such as becomes his nature and excellencies. It is, in a word, forgiveness that is with God, and by the exercise whereof he will be known so to be. God himself doth really separate and distinguish his forgiveness from any thing that our thoughts and imaginations can reach unto; and that because it is his, and like himself. It is an object for faith alone; which can rest in that which it cannot comprehend. It is never safer, than when it is, as it were, overwhelmed with infiniteness. Were not forgiveness in God somewhat beyond what men could imagine, no flesh could be saved. This himself expresseth, Isaiah lv. 7, 8, 9. They are, as is plain in the context, thoughts of forgiveness, and ways of pardon, whereof he speaks. These our apprehensions come short of: we know little, or nothing, of the infinite largeness of ris heart in this natter. He that he speaks of, is an impiously wicked man, and a man of deceit, and perverse wickedness. He whose design and course is nothing but a lie, sin, and iniquity. Such an one as we would have little or no hopes of; that we would scarce think it worth our while to deal withal about a hopeless conversion; or can scarce find in our hearts to pray for him; but are ready to give him up, as one profligate and desperate. But let him turn to the Lord, and he shall obtain forgiveness. But how can this be?

Is it possible there can be mercy for such an one? Yes; for the Lord will multiply to pardon. He hath forgiveness with him to outdo all the multiplied sins of any that turn unto him, and seek for it. But this is very hard, very difficult for us to apprehend. This is not the way and manner of men: we deal not thus with profligate offenders against us. True, saith God: but your ways are not my ways. I do not act in this your ways are not my ways. I do not act in this manner like unto you; nor as you are accustomed to do. For the most part, when we come to deal with God about forgiveness, we hang in every briar of disputing, quarrelsome unbelief. This or that circumstance, or aggravation; this or that unparalleled particular, bereaves us of our confidence. Want of due consideration of him with whom we have to do, measuring him by that line of our own imaginations, bringing him down to our thoughts and our ways, is the cause of all our disquietments. Because we find it hard to forgive our pence, we think he cannot forgive talents. But he hath provided to obviate such thoughts in us, (Hosea xi. 9.) I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN. Our satisfaction in this matter, is to be taken from his nature. Were he a man, or as the sons of men, it were impossible that, upon such and so many provocations, he should turn away from the fierceness of his anger. But he is God. This gives an *infiniteness*, and an inconceivable boundlessness, to the forgiveness that is with him; and exalts it above all our thoughts and ways.\*

Thus Mr. Charrock, with reference to this particular:—"That fear that Adam had, when, frightened at the voice of God, he hid himself among the trees of the garden, hath remained in part with his posterity, when they reflect upon their crimes. We measure the nature of God by the qualities of our own; and because we are not forward to remit men's offences against us,

<sup>\*</sup> On the Hundreth and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 220, 221, 222.

we are apt to imagine that God hath not clemency enough to pardon the faults committed against him. Hence it is that persons, deeply humbled under a sense of the curses of the law, are ready to lick up the dust under the feet of Christ, and beholding an absolute necessity of him, are with much ado brought to be-Though the design of God in setting out Christ for a propitiation be declared to them, the sufficiency of his merit, the acceptation of it by God, the fruits others have found of it that the design of Christ's coming was to ease those in that condition; yet they are hardly induced to lay aside those jealousies they have of God. When men are soundly convinced of the nature and evil of sin, they become vile in their own eyes. Their sin galls them; the law terrifies them; the notions of God's justice are awakened in them, and lie close to them. They are sensible of the degenerateness and rebellion of their nature : they think God cannot but hate them, and they expect from him only the severity of a judge: and when evangelical mercy is declared, it seems incredible to them, because it exceeds their nature and dispositions. The greatness of the mercy proffered makes them stagger: they believe not God to be so merciful, because they cannot be so; (for in all conditions of men, it is natural to limit God according to their own petty dimensions; and not elevate their thoughts to his, but judge of his thoughts by theirs:) and although his mercy is above the mercy of a creature, we are apt to think his nature as incapable of a largeness as our own. Since man has become vain in his imaginations, he is apt to measure divine things according to those principles which are in his own fancy. Hence God calls to men, to forsake their thoughts, their disparaging conceptions of him; since his thoughts were different from theirs, as much as the heavens from the earth. (Isaiah lv. 7, 8.) He hath higher thoughts of good to them, than either they had for themselves, or could think God had for them."\*

<sup>\*</sup> Works, Vol. II. p. 457, 468.

The promises of the New Covenant are spiritual, and expressed in the absolute, or unconditional form. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no

more."+

This covenant provides for all its objects those two capital blessings, justification and sanctification: with which glorification is, by divine constitution, inseparably connected." Well might the Apostle speak of the covenants of PROMISE: || for the language of this feedral engagement is that of mere grace, and all in the form of absolute promises. I will, and they shall, is Jehovah's mode of speaking, on this momentous occa-All the covenantees, it is here ascertained, shall be rendered both wise and holy, in order to their being happy. But the promised wisdom and holiness, it is very observable, are plainly represented as flowing from that mercy which pardons the guilty. A free, full, and everlasting forgiveness, though the last particular mentioned, is nevertheless introduced in such a manner as evidently shows, that it should be first sought, at the hand of sovereign mercy—sought by sinners, not as already possessing any degree of sanctity, but in order to it. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts—all shall know me—for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and and their iniquities will I remember no more. This is perfectly agreeable to that delightful and comprehensive saying; there is forgiveness with thee, THAT THOU

t Heb. viii, 10, 11, 12. Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

<sup>‡</sup> Rom. viii. 29, 10 || Eph. ii. 12.

MAYEST BE FEARED. Now, this divine covenant including the grand principles of evangelical truth; containing all the blessings which perishing sinners want; and exhibiting those blessings in unconditional promises, or as matter of mere grace; it seems not only natural, but necessary to conclude, that the ungodly are completely warranted by this gracious constitution, to believe in him, who bears the character of its Mediator

and Surety.\* Mr. James Hervey, after having produced the language of the new covenant, proceeds thus:—"Where are your conditions in this draught? Where are any terms required of impotent man? Is it not all promise, from the beginning to the end? That repentance, and that faith, for whose conditionality you plead, are they not both comprehended in this heavenly deed? and comprehended under the form of blessings vouchsafed. not of tasks enjoined? Does the contract run in this manner? I require and command. Or in this strain? I grant and bestow. The Lord says, I will put my laws; I will write them. The work shall not be laid on my creatures, but done by myself. They shall be my people, and I will remember their sins no more. What? provided they perform such and such duties. I read no such clause. I see no such proviso. All is absolutely free; dependent on no performance of ours; but flowing from sovereign, supreme, self-influenced goodness."† Thus Dr. Owen :- "The covenant of God is not suspended on our will, or on any conditions to be performed by us; but has all its virtue and effect, from the authority, the fidelity, and the grace of God himself. For it is an absolute promise of grace; nor is there any condition of the covenant, which is not contained in the promise itself."

<sup>\*</sup> Heb. vii. 22. viii. 6.

<sup>†</sup> Eleven Letters to Mr. J. Wesley, p. 170, 171. See also, p. 172, 174, 175, 176.

<sup>‡</sup> Theologoumena, L. III. C. i. § 6. Brem. Vide Witsii Oecon. Fed. L. III. C. i. § 8—18. Acta Synod. Dordrech. Pars III. p. 312.

Gracious proclamations. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, whoso is simple, let him turn in hither! As for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink."\*

Now the proof of my position becomes more strong, and more evident. For here we have direct, loud, and solemn addresses, to guilty and miserable creatures that are perishing in their sins—addresses, in the form of proclamations, from the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace, to the foolish, the starving, and those that have no money; but, like the Prodigal, are feeding on swinish husks, and perishing with hunger. These are the patentees in the heavenly grant: for to them the proclamation is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: yea, come to to my richly furnished table, there gratuitously to feed on royal dainties, which are the provisions of my grace." It is not easy to conceive of any proclamation from the court of heaven, that could have been more happily adapted to remove discouragement from a disponding mind; or to obviate doubts, respecting the ungodly being warranted to believe in Jesus Christ.

<sup>\*</sup> Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. Prov. ix. 1-5.

Kind invitations, winning persuasions, and important entreaties. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth—come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest—the spirit and the bride say, come: and let him that heareth say come: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind—go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. We persuade men—we are ambassadors for Christ, as though god did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him\*."

In these divine testimonies we behold, what the Psalmists calls the MARVELLOUS loving kindness of God.† For here we have, not only the most gracious and reiterated invitations, but the most attractive persuasions, and the most earnest solicitations—of whom? Why, of those who are far from a state of sanctity: being blind to their spiritual interests; strongly disaffected to God; absolutely incapable of providing for their own happiness, not being able either to work, or walk; the most wretched of mankind; and little better than a nuisance to civil society. For what purposes? To accept of rest, in Christ, for their souls: to be reconciled to God: and to be guests at a royal banquet. Yes, here we have, not only the Apostles of Christ, but Christ himself; and, in his ambassadors, even the divine Father; inviting, persuading, entreating the polluted, impoverished, perishing wretches, to regard the vicarious work of Jesus, as the only ground of their justification; and the plentiful provisions of divine grace, as containing

<sup>\*</sup> Isa· xlv. 22. Matt. xi. 28. Rev. xxii. 17. Lnke xiv. 21, 23. 2 Cor. v. 11. 20, 21.

<sup>†</sup> Psalm xvii. 7. xxxi. 21.

all they want for their complete happiness. These invitations, therefore, may be justly considered as a direct and perfect warrant, for sinners of every nation, and of every character, who are indulged with the joy-ful news, to believe in Jesus.

The perfect readiness, and the sacred pleasure, with which the Father of mercies receives returning profli-"He arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."\*

What an admirable description of divine, paternal mercy; and how agreeable to the gracious import of those delightful passages that were last reviewed! The parable which contains this exquisitely tender and charming representation of pardoning mercy and free acceptance, was designed by our Lord to vindicate his own conduct against the objections of Scribes and Pharisees; to rebuke the pride of self-righteous confidence; to encourage persons of the most profligate characters to apply for mercy; and to assure them that, in so doing, they shall not be disappointed. Disappointed! no: for, be their transgressions ever so many, or their demerits ever so great, our Lord represents the divine father, as compassionately meeting each profligate upon his return; as embracing him, with parental affection; as passing an act of oblivion upon all his enormous offences; as investing him with the robe of righteousness; as adorning him with the beauties of

holiness; and as admitting him into the celestial family: all which is done, without one upbraiding word, and with supreme delight. "The Prodigal came," says Mr. HERVEY, "with no recommendation, either of dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness, his misery, and an acknowledgment of vileness; which had every aggravating, not one extenuating cir-Yet he was received-received with indulgence-received with caresses-and, without staying to provide any handsome apparel of his own, was clothed with that best robe, the robe of a Saviour's righteousness."\* Such is divine compassion! Such that forgiveness which is with God! and such encouragement is there for the most notorious profligates to believe in Jesus!

Blessings, requested by saints, and bestowed by the Lord, for his own sake-for the sake of his goodness, of his mercy, and of his name. For his own sake. "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy trangressions for mine own sake-for mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it !†" For the sake of his goodness. "According to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord ! For the sake of his mercy. For thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them - redeem us for thy mercies' sake !-- Save me, for thy mercies' sake ! | For the sake of his name. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory!—I had pity, for my holy name—I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake—for my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off—I will sanctify my great name,—when I have been sanctified in you for thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great—help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name—do thou for me, O God, the Lord,

<sup>\*</sup> Theron and Aspasio, Vol. III. p. 312, 313. † Isa. xliii. 25 xlviii. 11. ‡ P Psalm xxv. 7.

W Neh. ix. 31. Psalm xliv. 26. vi. 4.

for thy name's sake—O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake !—for thy name's sake lead me and guide me—he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake—quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake—He saved them for his name's sake—the Lord will not forsake his

people, for his great name's sake."\*

It is hence apparent, that God, in the bestowment of blessings on the children of men, is not influenced by the purity of their hearts, the piety of their lives, or the worthiness of their characters; but by a regard to his own eternal perfection; to the supreme excellence of his own revealed name; and to the everlasting honor of his own immense goodness. No: the blessings of salvation, on whomsoever conferred, are never to be considered as distinguishing worth, are never to be considered as distinguishing worth, and rewarding merit; but as designed to display the riches of divine mercy, and the glory of the divine character, by relieving the wretched, and saving the unworthy. Now, the Divine Majesty having revealed himself as exercising mercy, and granting spiritual blessings, for his own sake; the polluted, ungodly, and perishing sinner is completely warranted to rely on that mercy, as manifested in the atonement, for pardon, acceptance, and peace, independent of every other consideration. This perfectly suits, not only the apostate state of man, but the peerless majesty of God. For as he is possessed of boundless being; as all creatures received their existence from his power, and are entirely dependent on his pleasure; and as the sum total of all created existence is but an atom, in comparison with him; so he acts perfectly agreeable to his own character, in making himself the ultimate end of his whole conduct, and in all things consulting his own glory.

The passages here produced, being all extracted \*Jer. xiv 21. Ezek. xxxvi 21, 22. Isa. xlviii 9, Ezek. xxxvi 23, Ps. xxv 11 | 1xxix 9. cix 21. Jer. xiv 7. Ps. xxxi 3, xxiii 3, exliii 11, cvi 8. 1 Sam. xii 22. See also Josh. vii 9. Exck. xx 9, 14, 22, 44.

from the Old Testament, are quite suitable to that revelation which God made of himself under the Jewish economy; and to the import of his name JEHOVAH, by which he made himself known to the chosen tribes. For that name was, in a particular manner, his own:\* by which he was distinguished, as the only object of Israel's worship, and as their king, from all the deities and sovereigns of the ancient heathens. most august name, together with its glorious import, he proclaimed to Moses in the most solemn and commanding manner: to which name, and its comprehensive significancy, reference is apparently had in many of the texts just adduced. Moses, on a very sorrowful occasion, regarded it, as affording the most powerful plea with God, on the behalf of Israel, when they had greatly offended, and were threatened with extermination. Joshua, too, has recourse to the same sublime character, in pleading the cause of Israel at his Maker's footstool, when they were under the tokens of divine anger. The sacred import of this name was, to the ancient saints, like a strong tower, or an impregnable fortress, for the encouragement and confidence which they derived from it. Really to understand the fruitful significancy of it, was always attended with confidence in the God of Israel. For it is written, they that know thy name will put their trust in thee. I Now, if the revealed character of God, under the old economy, was pregnant with encouragement for miserable sinners to rely on his mercy for pardon and salvation; it cannot be supposed that evangelical truth, under the christian system, is less favorable to the cause of human hope. Relative to the name JEHOVAH, Dr. Owen says :--"To be known by this name; to be honored, feared, believed as that declares him, is the great glory of God. And shall this fail us? Can we be deceived trusting in

<sup>\*</sup> Exod. vi. 2, 3. Psalm lxxxiii. 18. † Exod. xxxiii 18, 19. xxxiv. 5—8. † Numb. xiv.17—20. | Josh. vii. 9. | § Prov. xviii. 10. | ¶ P. ix. 10.

it, or expecting that we shall find him to be what his

name declares? God forbid!"\*

Spiritual blessings absolutely free and irrevocable gifts. "Being justified freely, by his grace—the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many—the free gift is of many offences unto justification-they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of right-eousness-by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life-the things that are freely given to us of God-wine and milk, without money, and without price-the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord-he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things—thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also—the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"†

How admirably adapted is the economy of redemption to our apostate state! Are we miserable? God is merciful. Are we unworthy? God is gracious. Are we, to the last degree, impoverished? God is immensely bountiful. The spiritual blessings which he confers, are absolutely free gifts: and gifts, we know, are not purchased, but bestowed: not obtained upon conditions to be performed, but received as matter of mere favor. The blessings of divine grace were not intended to recognise moral worth, but to relieve the indigent; not designed to indicate holy qualities in the receiver, but to display generosity in the giver. When we reflect on the personal dignity of Christ, as the Son of God; on the unchangeable interest he had in his Father's love; and on the Father delivering him up to an execrable death for mere sinners; we cease to wonder that, with him, he freely bestows all spiritual blessings, without any regard to worthiness in them on

<sup>\*</sup> On exxx. Psalm, p. 199. + Rom. iii. 21. v. 15, 16, 17, 18. 1 Cor. ii 12. Isa.lv. 1. Rom. vi, 23. viii, 32. Ps. lxviii, 18, Rom. xi, 29.

whom they are conferred. Because the gift of Christ himself is the grand evidence of God's love to sinners; incomparably greater than that of authorising the ungodly to believe in Jesus, or than that of his giving heaven to saints.

Divine love, mercy, and grace, directly opposed to works, and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Not of works, but of him that calleth. To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. If by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."\*

This opposition between divine mercy, and human works; the grace of God, and the worthiness of man; is very observable, and extremely important. For the contrasted view that is here given of these particulars, is far from being an incidental thing. We do not find it, in the apostolic writings, once or twice only; and that with reference to articles of comparatively small

<sup>\* 1</sup> John iv 10. Rom. ix 16, 11, iv 5, 6, 16. Eph. ii 8, 9. Titus iii 5. 2 Tim. i 9. Rom. xi 6.

consequence; but, in many places, in an argumentative manner, and relative to blessings of the highest moment. The sentiment, therefore, which is conveyed by this contrasted form of expression, is to be considered as a grand principle of the apostolic doctrine; and this mode of speaking, as the current language of inspiration, relative to those capital blessings, election, conversion, parden, and justification

version, pardon, and justification.

Now, respecting the objects of God's eternal choice, their conversion to Christ, their complete forgiveness, and their perfect acceptance with the Most Holy; the reasonings of Paul, where this kind of language is used, plainly show, that his design was entirely to exclude, not only all merit strictly so called, but all comparative worthiness. Yes, he intended to prove, that God, in the bestowment of these blessings, has not the least regard to personal holiness, or moral worth, in the favored objects of his kindness; but considers them as equally unworthy with those who finally perish. Nay, in the last of these instructive passages the apostle proves, professedly and in a formal manner, that grace and works, or divine favor and comparative human worthiness, are so opposite one to another, that it is impossible for them to concur in procuring the same blessings. So that whosoever considers himself as distinguished from others, by virtuous habits or pious performances, and thence derives encouragement to look for accept ance with God, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, confounds the most opposite ideas relating to an affair of the highest moment; rejects the determination of Paul; and must be miserably disappointed. I said, COMPARATIVE human worthiness: for that is all which the nature of the case admits. Because worthiness of divine blessings, in a strict, legal, absolute sense, and especially as to apostate creatures, is impossible. Consequently, the gospel, in which this contrast be-tween grace and work is thus frequently formed, must be considered as authorising the ungodly to believe in Jesus.

Divine fidelity engaged, that none of those who be-lieve in Christ shall be disappointed. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal lifehe that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life—him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out—I will give him rest-whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die-he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved -whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."\*

That divine fidelity is here pledged, for the everlasting security of all who really believe in Jesus, will not be disputed by those that maturely consider the gracious declarations, and revere the sacred writings. It is equally clear, that these passages exhibit the Lord Redeemer as free for miserable sinners, of every nation. and of every character, to whom the glad tidings come. For the language is not, he that is disposed to keep the divine commands-he that has performed conditionswhoever is comparatively worthy and believeth in Christ: but, he that believeth-whosoever believeth. Consequently, this exhibition of Christ, and that assurance of complete salvation to all that believe in him, attest the fact for which I contend.

Acts and precedents of divine mercy, in pardoning the greatest offences, and in saving the vilest of sinners. "Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such ( tvata) were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. We ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when (07 E) the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us

John iii. 15, 16, 36. vi. 37. Matt. xi. 28. John xi. 26. Mark xvi. 16. Rom. ix. 33.

-dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom we all had our conversation in time past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: THAT IN THE AGES TO COME, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. I was there a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: \* but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me the chief  $(\pi \rho \omega \tau \omega)$  Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for A PATTERN to them WHICH SHOULD HEREAFTER BELIEVE IN HIM TO LIFE EVERLASTING."+

That these instances of saving mercy were entered on divine record, as acts and precedents of the court of heaven; and under that very notion, are to be regarded by sinners in all future ages, the texts themselves inform us. Now, as these authenticated facts display the riches of reigning grace, in saving some of the most abominable characters that ever lived; and as these instances of superabounding, sovereign mercy to profligate, impious wretches, were intended by Jesus Christ as a pattern of his own procedure in following

<sup>\*</sup> Beza here exclaims, "Behold, what preparatory deserts the Apostle produces!"

<sup>† 1</sup> Cor. vi 9, 10, 11. Titus iii 3, 4, 5. Eph. i. 1, 7, 1 Tim, i 13, 16.

times; they must be considered as warranting the most detestably vile to believe in our Almighty Saviour. For it is not easy to conceive of more flagitious characters, than some of those that are here specified. Yet they were encouraged to believe in Jesus. On him they relied, and were not disappointed. Did but those profligates who, by a course of enormous offences, are sunk into a kind of hardened despair, understand the design of these acts and precedents, they would no longer say, with some in the prophet, there is no hope: no; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go.\* For the plenitude of that revealed provision which sovereign mercy has made to relieve the chief of sinners, is, as one observes, "a firm bottom of comfort against the guilt of the most bloody and crimson sins. Because free grace is not tied to any rules: it may do what it pleaseth," consistently with the rights of justice.

Do the inspired writers teach, that awful judgments, inflicted on the rebellious Israelites, were committed to sacred record for our admonition, ‡ and to guard us against sin? they also inform us, that the justification of Abraham by faith, and without works, was recorded for our instruction, | respecting that capital blessing of divine grace. Nay, Paul assures us, that whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning: that we, through patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope. § On this ground, therefore, we may safely conclude, that the numerous particular instances of divine forgiveness, which stand recorded in holy scripture, were intended to encourage hope in the guilty breast, and to produce reformation in the profligate life. Have we, for example, undoubted reason to conclude, that perfect pardon was graciously granted, to Lot for his drunkenness and incest—to

<sup>\*</sup> Jer. ii 25.

<sup>†</sup> Dr. Spurstowe's Wells of Salvation, p. 51, ‡ 1 Cor. x. 11. || Rom. iv 23, 24.

David, for his adultery and murder—to Manasseh, for his outrageous and monstrous wickedness-to publicans and prostitutes, for their extortion and impurity-to Peter, for denying his Lord with imprecations and perjury - to a crucified robber and ruffian, for his obduracy and blasphemy, of which he was guilty but a little before he expired on a gibbet-to any of the Jews, for the unparalleled crime of crucifying Messiah; the son of God,-to Saul of Tarsus, for blaspheming Christ and murdering saints-and to the Philippian jailor, for his persecution and intentional selfmurder?\* All these facts proclaim in our ears, THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD, THAT HE MAY BE FEARED! Their language, to the most impious and abandoned, is, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will ABUNDANTY PARDON. I will conclude this particular in the following words of Dr. Owen: "I may safely say, that there is no sin, no degree of sin, no aggravating circumstance of sin, no kind of continuance in sin, (the only sin excepted) but that there are those in heaven who have been guilty of them."+

The riches of pardoning mercy, and the benefits of saving grace, are the joy, the glory, and the song, of believers on earth, and of the beatified in heaven. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob,

<sup>\*</sup> Gen. xix 31 38. 2 Sam. xii. 2 Chron. xxxiii. Matt. xxi 31, 32. Luke vii 29, 32, 50. Matt. xxvii. 74. Mark xiv. 71. Matt. xxvii 44. Mark xv 32. Luke xxiii 39, 43. xxiii 34 xxiv 47. Acts ii 41 iv 4. Acts ix 1, xxii 4, xxvi 10, 11. xvi. 27, 34.

<sup>†</sup> On the cxxx Psalm, p 147.

and glorified himself in Israel—I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness—who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage! God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ—rejoice in the Lord alway and again I say, rejoice—of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope. They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue—joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth-there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,"\*

That the grant of complete pardon, and the enjoyment of spiritual peace: the hope of everlasting happiness, and the eternal fruition of heaven; should excite joy and, produce praise, there is no reason to wonder: especially, when the blessedness included in these incomparable benefits is considered as the fruit of mere sovereign favor, through the blood of Jesus Christ; which is manifestly the case here. But in proportion as the forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons, are considered as depending on conditions performed, or on qualifications obtained by us; there is reason of joy in our own exertions and worthiness:† which is diametrically contrary to the apostolic doctrine of salvation by grace.‡ For the language of every

<sup>\*</sup>Psalm ciii 2, 3. Isa. xliv. 22, 23, lxi 10. Micah vii. 18. Gal. vii 14. Rom. v. 11. Philip. iv 4. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. 1 Pct. i. 3. Rev. v 9. Luke xv 7 10. † Rom. iv 9. ‡ Rom. iii 27. 1 Cor. iv. 7. Eph. ii 5—9.

real believer is, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but

real believer is, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.\* The gratitude, therefore, the joy, and the exultation of scriptural saints, for spiritual blessings, infer the point for which I am pleading.

The eternal design of God, in the work of salvation by Jesus Christ, was to manifest, exalt. and forever to glorify his own grace, in rendering the unworthy, everlastingly happy. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off—help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name—having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of this grace—in whom also we have obtained an inheritance—that we should be to the have obtained an inheritance—that we should be to the praise of his glory—ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."†

As, in that most wonderful of all works, REDEMP-

As, in that most wonderful of all works, REDEMPTION, the design of God was to manifest, illustrate, glorify, his own grace; as the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ reveal that grace, in connection with its design; and as no doctrine deserves the name of gospel, which does not exhibit the grace of God, as abounding, reigning, glorious—worthy of everlasting admiration and praise; the genuine gospel must be considered as encouraging, inviting, warranting, the most ungodly to believe in Jesus. For divine grace, in election, redemption, regeneration, and justification, has no concern with any besides the absolutely unworthy. To this its very nature, and the design of God in dispensing the blessings proceeding from it, are completely adapted. Its very nature. For it is not merely grace, though as such it must be sovereign; but it is grace with a glory around it. The GLORY of his grace, is the \*Ps, cxv 1.

language of Paul. Now, an essential part of its most shining, illustrious, glorious qualities must consist, in its being absolutely free, and infinitely rich. The former, as to its objects; the latter, as to its benefits; and both, as providing for the altogether vile. The design of God in dispensing the blessings proceeding from it. This was, we are here expressly informed, not, ultimately, our happiness, though that be a great design; much less the rewarding of human worth; but his own praise—the praise of his own glory—and the praise of the

glory of his GRACE.

"If there be any pardon with God," says Dr. Owen, "it is such as becomes him to give. When he pardons, he will abundantly pardon. Go, with your half-forgiveness, limited, conditional pardons, with reserves and limitations unto the sons of men; it may be, it may become them; it is like themselves. That of God is absolute and perfect; before which our sins are as a cloud before the east wind, and the rising sun. Hence he is said to do this work, with his whole heart and with his whole soul. This forgiveness is in or with God, not only so as that we may apply ourselves unto it, if we will, for which he will not be offended with us; but so, also, as that he hath placed his great glory in the declaration and communication of it: nor can we honor him more, than by coming to him to be made partakers of it, and so to receive it from him. For the most part, we are, as it were, ready, rather to steal forgiveness from God, than to receive from him, as one that gives it freely and largely. We take it up, and lay it down, as though we would be glad to have it, so God did not, as it were, see us take it; for we are afraid he is not willing we should have it indeed. We would steal this fire from Heaven, and have a share in God's treasures and riches, almost without his consent. least, we think we have it from him *xgre*, with much difficulty; that it is rarely given, and scarcely obtained. That he gives it out with a kind of *unwilling will*- ingness, as we sometimes give alms without cheerfulness; and that he looseth so much by us, as he giveth out in pardon. We are apt to think, that we are very willing to have forgiveness; but that God is unwilling to bestow it; and that, because he seems to be a looser by it, and to forego the glory of inflicting punishment for our sins; which, of all things, we suppose, he is most loth to part withal. And this is the very nature of unbelief. But, indeed, things are quite otherwise. He hath, in this matter, through the Lord Christ, ordered all things, in his dealings with sinners, to the praise of the glory of his grace. His design, in the whole mystery of the gospel, is to make his grace glorious, or to exalt pardoning mercy. The great fruit and product of his grace is forgiveness; the forgiveness of sinners. This God will render himself glorious in, and by. All the praise, glory, and worship, that he designs from any in this world, is to redound unto him by the way of this grace, as we have proved at large before."\*

God condescends to represent himself as taking sublime delight, in the exercise of pardoning mercy, in bestowing the blessings of grace, and in making his people completely happy. He delighteth in mercy. "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul—it [the bestowment of spiritual blessings] shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off—as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee—I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor, before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I

<sup>\*</sup>On the Hundreth and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 225, 226,

do unto them—the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing—the father said to the servants, bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry—it was meet that we should make merry. and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found."\*

Is the Father of mercies represented as having engaged, by two immutable things, for the final security of his people, in order that they who flee for refuge to the hope set before us might have strong consolation?† it is in allusion to the most solemn assurances which men can give of their fidelity one to another. So here, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, and in allusion to our modes of expressing the most lively sensations of joy, he exhibits himself as possessing human affections, and speaks as if his own unchangeable felicity were increased, by liberally dispensing spiritual blessings, and by rendering the wretched completely happy. This, as observed under a former particular, is expressive of marvellous loving kindness; and most strongly adapted to show, that the needy, the ungodly, the perishing sinner, has no reason to suspect the glorious God of reluctance to bestow the blessings of grace. No: he gives with a liberal heart, and a bountiful hand. To pardon freely; graciously to confer spiritual benefits; and, if I may so speak, to do it with divine delight; are a conduct worthy of his character as depending to the period of the honor of automatical strong to the strong to t acter, as denominated Love; and for the honor of our Lord's mediation. Because love delights in the happiness of its objects; and Christ is glorified in the salvation of those who are justly condemned. Surely then, the genuine gospel must warrant the ungodly to believe

<sup>\*</sup> Micah vii 18 Jer. xxxii 41. Isa. lv 13. Ivii 5. lxv 19. Jer. xxxiii 8, 9. Zeph. iii 17. Luke xv 22, 23, 24, 32, † Heb, vi 13—18,

in Jesus, by whom the character, the counsels, and the perfections of God, are made known to sinners.

As the preceding, with similar particulars, constitute that comprehensive and gracious message which is called THE GOSPEL; we must now consider, to whom, by divine command, these glad tidings were sent—the state and character of those to whom the apostles proclaimed the joyful news—and their immediate design in making the gracious proclamation.

To whom, by divine command, these glad tidings were sent. "Go ye, and teach all nations—Go ye into all the world, and proclaim the glad tidings to every creature—thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."\*

After our Lord's resurrection from the dead, his commission to the apostles, for preaching the gospel, was extensive as the human species. The middle wall of partition, between Jews and Gentiles, being demolished, those first ministers of Christ were not only permitted, but required, as providence gave opportunity, to proclaim the glad tidings wherever they came, without any exception of nation, of rank, or of character. Yes, the prerogatives connected with carnal descent from Abraham, the covenant made at Sinai, and the Mosaic economy, being all abolished; those ambassadors of heaven were commanded to publish pardon, and proclaim peace, through Jesus Christ, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The state and character of those to whom the apostles proclaimed the joyful news. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxvii 18. Mark xvi 15. Luke xxiv 47.

to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen—and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implicable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them-we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."\*

What a melancholy moral portrait is this! How strong the colouring, and how dark the shades! Jews and Gentiles, without difference, are here described, as bearing characters the most detestable; and as being in a state the most awful. Yet this description comes from the hand of one, whose heart was fraught with

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. i 21-32. iii 9-18.

benevolence to his own species, especially to his countrymen; and from a pencil which could not give an exaggerated representation. Of such characters, in the estimate of Heaven, did the nations consist, when the apostles, as ministers of divine truth, received their high commission. Yes, to a world thus desperately degenerate, and thus lying in wickedness, were those ambassadors of Christ sent with tidings of salvation. To this abominably wicked world they exhibited the crucified Jesus; preaching pardon, and announcing peace, through his atoning blood. For, if pardon be not published, if peace be not proclaimed in the name of Jesus, the gospel, strictly speaking, is not preached. As therefore, it is hard to conceive of characters more hateful, of persons more criminal, or of a state more awful, (except in the case of judicial blindness, or of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit;) than those here described; the ministers of Christ, if they would act agreeably to our Lord's commission, and to the apostolic pattern, must proclaim glad tidings to the vilest of men.

Their immediate design in making the gracious proclamation to such impious and profligate characters. "Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned—many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. The revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith—that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe—our testimony among you was believed—many of them that

heard the word believed --- so we preach, and so ye believed."\*

Here we have the position to be confirmed, in very nearly the express language of inspiration. For the apostles were commanded to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. Christ, his work, and the grace revealed by him, constitute the substance of those glad tidings, which were to be published in all nations, and to every creature. The nations were in the most deplorable state of ignorance, of depravity, and of wickedness. To them, however, the joyful proclamation was made, that it might be credited by individuals, without exception; and it was by the divinely gracious report† that faith came. But the facts revealed in that report could not be really believed, without relying on Jesus Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. Consequently, the genuine gospel is a complete warrant for the most

ungodly to believe in Jesus.

Let us epitomise the preceding particulars, and bring them into one view. Here, then, we have, the condescending characters which our Lord bears—his design, in coming into the world: which was to save sinners, even the most wretched and worthless—the work which Christ performed, the sufferings he underwent, and the benefits to sinners thence resulting—the all-sufficiency of his work, to save the most guilty and vile—preventing mercy, and the free pardon of enormous offenders—the sovereignty, the riches, and the plenitude of divine grace—the sparing and pardoning mercy of God, beyond all parallel and all praise—the promises of the new covenant unconditional—the most gracious proclamations to those who are starving—the kindest invitations, the most winning persuasions, and the most pressing entreaties, of those that are perishing, to regard the provision which grace has made for the utterly destitute

<sup>\*</sup> Mark xvi 15, 16. John xx 31. Rom. xvi 25 25. Acts xv 7. 2 Thessi 10. Acts iv 4. 1 Cor. xv 11 See also Acts xviii 8. Rom. i 15, 16. x 16. Luke xxiv 25. Acts viii 12. 1 Cor. iii 5. Heb. iv 2. † Rom. x 17.

-the perfect readiness, and the sacred pleasure, with which the father of mercies receives returning profligates-blessings requested by saints, and bestowed by the Lord, for his own sake-for the sake of his goodness, of his mercy, and of his name--spiritual blessings absolutely free and irrevocable gifts—divine love, mercy, and grace, directly opposed to works and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree-divine fidelity engaged, that none of those who believe in Christ shall be disappointed-acts and precedents of divine mercy, in pardoning the greatest offences, and in saving the vilest of sinners-the riches of pardoning mercy, and the benefits of saving grace, are the joy, the glory, and the song, of believers on earth, and of the blessed in heaven-the eternal design of God, in the work of salvation by Jesus Christ, was to manifest, exalt, and for ever to glorify his own grace, in rendering the unworthy everlastingly happy—God condescends to represent himself as taking sublime delight, in the exercise of pardoning mercy, in bestowing the blessings of grace, and in exalting his people to complete felicity. These wonderful facts, and gracious truths, with others of a similar kind, constitute that gospel which the apostles, in pursuance of divine command, proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles. The nations were then extremely impious, profligate, and wicked; and, finally, the gracious proclamation was made to the wicked world that it might be credited, by sinners of every character, in all nations; and that, believing in Jesus Christ, they might receive pardon, enjoy peace, perform obedience, and have everlasting life.

By this abstract of evangelical truth, it must, I think, appear, to every intelligent and impartial reader, that if the testimony of God to an apostate, guilty, and wretched world, concerning his incarnate son, and relative to the riches of his own grace, be not a sufficient warrant for the most ungodly person upon earth to believe in Jesus; it is not easy to conceive of any divine

declarations which could have been made, that would have authorised any of those whom the scriptures call sinners, or the guilty in a perishing condition, to believe in Christ.

Leaving my reader to consider the foregoing paragraphs in their connection one with another, I shall only add; if the gospel be not a complete warrant for the most ungodly to believe in Jesus, it must be either because the grace revealed in it is not equal to their wants; or because they are tacitly forbidden, while destitute of holiness, to treat him as the Saviour. Not the former: for the grace revealed is rich, abundant, exceedingly abundant, and all sufficient. Not the latter; for the ungodly, as we have already seen, so far from being prohibited, are invited to Christ, and earnestly entreated, by a consideration of his vicarious death, to be reconciled to God.\* If the gospel did not warrant the ungodly to believe in Jesus, it could not have answered its name, it could not have been glad tidings, to a world so extremely degenerate, corrupt, and criminal, as all the nations were, when the apostles received their divine commission to proclaim salvation to Jews and Gentiles, without exception, through Jesus Christ. If the gospel do not authorise the most ungodly to believe in Jesus, it seems impossible for them to credit the gracious report under its natural and proper character: it being denominated THE GLAD TIDINGS, because it reveals a Saviour for sinners that are in a PERISHING state. But, of all the sinners on earth, those only are in a PERISHING state, who are entirely destitute of true godliness; for the word of infallibility frequently represents the godly, as in in a state of salvation. † Nor is the gospel itself really believed, any further than the saviour exhibited by it is the object of our dependance.

<sup>\*</sup> Isa. xlv 22, lv 1. Matt. xi 28. 2 Cor. v 20. † Matt. v 3, 4, 8. John v 24. vi 40, 54. x 27—29. Rem. xiii 11. Eph. ii 5, 8. Philip. i 6,

## CHAPTER II.

NO DEGREE OF HOLINESS PREVIOUSLY NECESSARY, TO WARRANT OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.

When a sinner is burdened with guilt, and filled with apprehensions of eternal ruin, his language is, "What shall I do to be saved? or, How shall I escape the wrath to come?" Being ignorant of that righteousness which the gospel reveals for the justification of the ungodly, he labors to obtain acceptance with God by his own efforts: till being better acquainted with the purity of the law, the holiness of God, and the corruption of his own heart, he despairs of being justified

by the works of the law.

To a person thus convinced of sin, and apprehensive of danger, one should suppose the glad tidings of sovereign grace, and the doctrine of complete salvation by Jesus Christ for the chief of sinners, would be embraced with all possible readiness. Experience and observation prove, however, that awakened sinners are frequently backward to receive encouragement from the glorious gospel. This arises, not from any defect in the grace it proclaims, or in the salvation it brings; not because the alarmed sinner is under any necessity, or in any distress, for which it does not reveal complete relief; but because he does not behold the glory of that grace which reigns triumphantly in it, and the design of God in making the rich provision. He wants to find himself some way distinguished from others, as a proper object of mercy, by holy tempers and sanctified affections. This is his grand embarrassment. In other words he considers himself as not sufficiently humbled, under a sense of sin; as not having a suitable abhorrence of it; and as not possessing those fervent breathings after holiness, which, as he supposes, are necessary before he can be warranted to believe in Jesus, with a well grounded hope of success.\*

<sup>\*</sup> See my Reign of Grace, Chap. iv. p. p. 84, 85. Edit. 4th.

the sinner, though oppressed with guilt, and earnestly desirous of salvation, opposes the designs of divine grace, by ardently seeking for holy qualifications, and personal worthiness, as prerequisite to faith in Jesus Christ! But, that no degree of holiness is previously necessary, to warrant our believing in the Lord Redeemer, I shall in the following paragraphs endeavor

to prove.

Under what consideration, then, is any degree of holiness in the heart of a sinner necessary, before he believes in Jesus? As constituting part of his justifying righteousness? This cannot be, without admitting, that acceptance with God is, in some degree, by our own rightousness. As the stipulated condition of acceptance with Christ? If so, a sinner, on performing that condition, may claim Christ, and all spiritual blessings in him, as matter of practitional debt. "For, as Dr. Owen says, where one thing is the condition of another, that other thing must follow the fulfilling of that condition: otherwise the condition of it, it is not."\* Yes, whether the condition prescribed be greater or less, the punctual performance of it must give a legal title to all the blessings annexed to that condition: which, in the case before us, would be to obtain justification by the works of the law. As the qualification for obtaining an interest in Christ, or a participation of his benefits? But, necessary as a pious turn of heart, is, to evince that we are partakers of Christ; it is not either an holy disposition, or faith itself, by which we obtain an interest in the blessings of our Lord's mediatorial work. No; that exalted privilege is not obtained by us, but freely granted of God, in the decree of elec-tion.† For the substitution of Christ, and the whole of his vicarious work, very strongly imply, that all the elect were interested in him before they possessed either faith, or holiness. Nay, genuine faith, and real sanctity

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, Chap. I. p. 124, Glasgow, 1760. † John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24, Eph. i 3-7.

ought ever to be considered, not as the cause, but as the fruits and evidences, of that interest. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.\*
Besides, were any degree of holiness the requisite qualification for an interest in Christ, it must be equally so respecting justification by him: which, again, brings us to the works of the law, as being remotely the procuring cause of our justification before God. As a stimulus, urging an application to Jesus Christ? But, friendly as every holy disposition in the heart of a converted sinner is, to communion with Christ, and to general happiness; no principal of sanctity can, with propriety, be considered as a requisite motive to our first believing in him. Because holiness, in the whole of its nature, is as manifestly spiritual health, as depravity and guilt are moral disease: † and every sinner, in his first believing on Christ, regards him as the great physician—as the Lord that healeth. ‡ But is it usual for either health, or the commencement of it, rather than disease, and the danger attending, to excite an ardent desire after a skilful and compassionate physician? As characterising the only persons to whom, by divine authority, the gospel can be addressed? Then the apostles must be considered as having preached, salvation in the name of Jesus, to the *church* only; not at all to the world: whereas their commission was, as we have already seen, -- proclaim the glad tidings to EVERY CREATURE. As necessary to preserve the sinner, after he believes in Jesus, from abusing revealed mercy? But, as I perceive no scriptural evidence of any one really believing in Christ, and yet, in the general course of his conduct, abusing divine mercy; so we have the most express, infallible information, that the grace of

<sup>\*</sup> John x 26. Eph. i 4.
† Ps. ciii 3. 1sa. liii 5. 1 Pet. ii 24. Hosea xiv 4.
‡ Matt. ix 12. Mark ii 17. Luke v 31. Exod xv 26.

God which bringeth salvation teaches to deny ungodliness; that faith in Jesus works by love to God and man; that faith without works is dead, and no better than that of devils. But let us examine the subject

more at large.

Every holy disposition is, to a certain degree, true holiness. On supposition, therefore, that it be necessary for a sinner to posses any measure of real sanctity in order to warrant his reliance on Christ; it may be justly demanded, what mortal shall determine the requisite quantum? Or who shall say, thus much is necessary, and no more? Nor, consistently with the doctrine of justification entirely by an imputed righteousness, and merely in a way of grace, is it easy to say, as appears by the preceding induction of particulars,

for what purpose it can be necessary.

An holy disposition, in any case, or in the least degree, is a disposition to universal and perfect holiness. For as there cannot be the least holiness, where there is no sincere affection for God; so, all holiness radically consists in love to him, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Consequently, if the contrary of our position be true, no sinner can warrantably believe in Jesus, until he be cordially disposed to perform all the divine precepts, and have the root of perfect holiness in him. But, were any minister of the word, when speaking of Jesus Christ as the saviour of sinners, expressly to say; "you, and you only, who are heartily disposed perfectly to keep the law, are warranted to believe in Christ;" it would, I presume, be esteemed a strange kind of gospel, and little short of an insult on the distressed conscience.

As we cannot conceive of holiness existing in any creature, that is entirely destitute of love to God; nor of God being loved by any creature, that does not know him; so, neither will the scriptures permit us to conclude, that any of Adam's degenerate offspring ever knew and loved the true God, except as revealed in the

Mediator. Nor will the Bible warrant our supposing, that sinners ever loved the Supreme; or that they cordially approve the true character of God; before they believe in Christ, as exhibited in the gospel. There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared—We love him, because he first loved us. For though he deserve the profoundest reverence, and the warmest affection, for what he is in himself; it is as manifesting his glory in Jesus Christ, that we either sincerely love,

or truly revere him.

If, by an awakened sinner, it be admitted as a fact, and believed as a doctrine, that no one is authorised to depend on Christ for pardon and peace, until possessed of an holy disposition; he must necessarily be more solicitous to find evidence of that important requisite existing in his heart, than to understand and believe what the gospel says concerning Christ. For such a persuasion must unavoidably direct his attention to the virtuous inclinations he desires to feel, and the righteous works he wishes to perform; rather than to the riches of revealed mercy, and to the all sufficiency of the redeemer's work. This mode of proceeding must, therefore, while it fosters his legal pride, embarrass his pained conscience: which effects are equally foreign from the genius of evangelical doctrine, and from the nature of true faith.

Our Lord, not being the saviour of man, as man, or of man, as holy; but of man, as depraved, guilty, and condemned; it apparently follows, from the nature of the case, that if Christ, under his graciously saving character, ever be regarded at all, in a way of dependence; the sinner must in his first application to him, consider himself as totally base and worthless. But, did he possess the least degree of true sanctity, that would be a false estimate of his own character. For holiness is no other than intellectual beauty, moral worth, and spiritual excellence. It is that by which angels are principally distinguished from devils: and,

consequently, any degree of it must constitute a most important difference, in state and character, between them that possess it, and those who are entirely unholy.

According to the sentiment here opposed, no one is authorised to believe in Jesus, until he is born of God; for such only, have any degree of real holiness. Be the conscience of a sinner, therefore, ever so much burdened with guilt, he must have some evidence of his being a new creature, before he can consider the gospel as exhibiting any relief, or as revealing a saviour in whom he may confide. Consequently, if, while possessed of these views, and acting consistently with them, he were to believe in Jesus; it must be under the notion of his being already a child of God, and of his possessing true holiness. But, were any man, professing faith in Christ, expressly to declare, "that it was under the notion of his previously possessing a new heart, or a sincere love to holiness, that he first believed in Jesus Christ;" even though his exterior conduct were ever so regular, many of those who deny the position for which I plead, would be ready to suspect him of self-deception. For they, I presume, would be very apprehensive, that his notions were self-righteous, and his hope delusive. But if, previous to believing in Christ, and in order to warrant a dependence upon him, there must be an holy turn of heart; why should the person supposed fall under suspicion so harsh? If it be a fact, that none but those who are previously born of God, and sincerely disposed to keep his commands, are encouraged, by the gospel, to believe in Jesus Christ; it cannot be either unlawful, or improper, for them, under that very character and consideration, to place their first reliance upon him. Because it is acting consistently, by applying the principle to practice. Whereas, for persons to maintain, that some degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant our believing in Christ; who nevertheless, in their first application to him, consider themselves as in danger of eternal ruin, and absolutely unworthy, are inconsistent.

The principle against which I contend implies, that sinners must be cordially reconciled to the true character of God, as revealed in the mediator, before they rely on Christ, and before they believe the gospel. But this is contrary to the apostolic doctrine. For, as it is by the gospel only, that the true character of God is made known to men; so the grand mean of reconciling the hearts of sinners to God, is the doctrine of our Lord's vicarious work. This we are taught, by the following admirable passage :- All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit. that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unio us the world of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech,\* by us: we pray,\* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. + Agreeable to which view of the delightful words, is the following language of Dr. OWEN: "The great work of them who are ambassadors for Christ, to be seech men, in his stead, to be reconciled unto God; is to reveal the will and love of the Father, in making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." ‡ Thus also Mr. CHARNOCK: "the reconciliation here spoken of, was the matter of the apostles' discourses and sermons; and the great argument they used to convert the world to God. &

<sup>\*</sup> The following criticism is, I think, worthy of notice; and is laid before the judicious reader for his determination. "The pronoun you is not in the Greek. The Apostle is not here urging the believing Corinthians to be reconciled to God; for he considered them as already reconciled; but he is setting before them the apostolic message to the world at large, as appears from the foregoing verse; and therefore the supplement ought to be men, or the world." Mr. Maclean's Christ's Commission to the Apostles, p. 85.

<sup>†2</sup> Cor. v. 18 21. ‡ Recommendatory preface to Mr. Eyre's free justification of a Sinner. § Works, Vol. II. p. 170. Edit 1690.

The gospel, strictly so called, is the doctrine of re-conciliation to God, as a righteous governor, by the death of his own incarnate son; and it is through be-lieving the testimony of God respecting the death of Christ, that the hearts of sinners are first reconciled to God, as appearing under his true character. For, faithful and gracious as that divine testimony is, it can have no such influence on the will, any further than it is believed. Remarkable is that saying ; if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.\* Let us review the admirable declaration. Reconciled when we were enemies. Consequently, while yet in our sins, in unregeneracy, and in spiritual death. Reconciled to God; as a righteous governor; as maintaining the rights of eternal justice, and the honors of the holy law. Reconciled to God by the Death of his son; he being made sin, and made a curse for us.† In his vicarious death, sin being concurred to and purished the root high sale relations. demned; and punished, the most high solemnly sanctified his great name; or, in the most emphatical manner, declared himself, his government, and his method of saving sinners, to be supremely holy. Much more BEING RECONCILED. This is contrasted with, when we were ENEMIES. The testimony of God concerning the death of Christ, being, through the divine influence, understood and believed; the reconciliation made by the blood of Jesus, between God as a just sovereign, and us as guilty subjects of his dominion, is received; the revealed character of God is approved; and we are cordially reconciled to him. We shall be saved by his life: that life which, as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, he ever lives to make intercession for us. Our divinely gracious Jesus devotes his life, though in a different way, the second time for the happiness of his people. Having expiated their guilt on the cross, by

<sup>\*</sup> Rom, v 10. † 2 Cor. v 21. Gal. iii 13. ‡ Rom. viii 3. § Ezek. xxxvi 23. ∥ Rom. v 10 ααταλλαγην. ¶ Heb. vii 25.

which he reconciled them to God when they were enemies; and they, in the prevailing turn of their hearts, being reconciled to the character, the grace, the dominion of God; he lives, as a priest on his throne\* to intercede for them, and subdue their enemies; to superintend all their concerns, and to secure their final

Admitting the sentiment against which I militate, no one either does or can believe on Jesus Christ, until possessed of substantial reason to consider himself as free from condemnation, and as an heir of immortal happiness; for, that such is the state of each regenerate person of every one distinguished and adorned by true holiness, is plain from the tenor of divine revelation. To be a child of God, by regeneration; to have pious affection toward God, and a cordial inclination to keep his commands; are in the estimate of scripture, evidences of a safe state, and ascertain everlasting felicity to all that are so distinguished. Yet, on the hypothesis opposed, such must be our state and character, before we are warranted to believe in Jesus!

That this is a just representation of the case, appears from the writings of an author who strenuously maintains the reverse of that for which I plead. Thus he speaks: "a hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight, in the law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin, must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the gospel, and faith and trust in Christ. The sinner who comes to Christ for salvation, comes as a true penitent; and that repentance is necessary to this faith." Now, that delight in the law of God, rightly understood; a true hatred of sin, and real penitence, are evidences of regeneration, and of genuine holiness, will scarcely be denied. It is equally clear, admitting the doctrine of final perseverance, that persons of such a character are safe, as to eternity: and yet, according to our author, such must

<sup>\*</sup> Zech. vi 12, 13.

every one be, before he may dare to believe in Jesus! Afterwards, however, which proves my assertion, the very same gentleman reasons in the following manner. "That men are naturally destitute of every degree of that which has the nature of true holiness, is most evident from scripture; in that the promises of salvation are every where made to them who exercise the least degree of this, or of that which is opposite to sin: and such have the character of good and holy persons, in distinction from others. Now, if the least degree of goodness entitles a man to salvation and denominates him a good man; then all men are naturally, wholly, without any degree of this, and so wholly corrupt; for all men are represented as naturally in a state of condemnation, and wholly destitute of that which is necessary in order to their salvation."\*

Were any measure of holiness previously necessary, to warrant our believing in Jesus Christ; pardon of sin, and peace with our offended sovereign, should be exhibted in a gospel ministry, as before observed, to none but those who are already born of God: because none but they possess the least degree of genuine sanctity. Nay, the gospel should be preached to regenerate persons, as such; no other being authorised to rely on Jesus, as revealed in it. But, would this answer the gracious designs of our Lord's command, preach the gospel to every creature? Preaching the gospel is, as already observed, proclaiming glad tidings to guilty, deprayed, and ruined creatures—tidings of pardon, of deprayed, and ruined creatures—tidings of pardon, of peace, and of salvation, through Jesus Christ. Preaching the gospel, is preaching Christ himself, or bearing a public testimony to his gracious character, and perfect work. Preaching the gospel, therefore, is proclaiming salvation by sovereign grace—is exhibiting Jesus, not as willing to supply the deficiencies in *upright* characters; nor, merely, as granting assistance to persons already in the way to heaven; but, as the only, the all-Mr. S. Hopkins's Two Discourses p. p. 23, 24, 106, Bennington, 1793,

sufficient, the absolutely free saviour of the condemned,

the worthless, the lost.

Again :- Did the apostles preach Jesus Christ, or did they proclaim pardon and peace through his blood, to those only whom they considered as really penitent, and as having an holy turn of heart? The reverse is a fact: for, as we have before seen, they were commissioned to proclaim glad tidings to the profligate, impious, and wicked world. Those, however, who are truly penitent, and possessed of real holiness, are not of the world, but of God; being manifestly called out of their natural state. When Paul was preaching to his Jewish brethren, of whom he had a painful suspicion that, while they wondered at his testimony, they would reject it and perish in their unbelief-even those Jews, who afterward are said to be filled with envy, to contradict and blaspheme; his language was, be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this illustrious Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.\* Now, as it would be a dangerous mistake to suppose that Paul declared the sins of those ungodly Jews to be already forgiven, and their persons justified; so it would be inconsistent with the nature of his gracious declaration to imagine, that he did not consider them as authorised, by his infallible testimony, immediately to believe in Christ for pardon and acceptance with God. I will add, is it supposable that Paul and Silas considered the Philippian jailor as born of God, and possessed of true holiness, when, in answer to his important query, they said; believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved? There is not, that I perceive, the least reason for any supposition of that kind.†

As it was under the character of a priest, that Christ

As it was under the character of a *priest*, that Christ expiated guilt, and made reconciliation; so, when a sinner first applies to him, though it be for the blessings

of salvation in general, yet his eye is principally fixed on pardon and peace. Justifying faith, says Dr. Owen, "respecteth Christ in his priestly office alone, as he was the surety of the covenant, with what he did in the discharge thereof. The consideration of his other offices is not excluded, but it is not formally comprised in the object of faith as justifying.\* Thus also Mr. Charnock: "When the venom of sin begins to work in the conscience, and the thunder of the law alarms it to the conscience, and the thunder of the law alarms it to judgment, and the punishment due to sin is presented in the horrors of it; the question immediately is, whether there be any remedy, and where? How forgiveness of sin is to be attained? The only remedy is proposed in Christ, and Christ as a sacrifice. It is not Christ risen, or ascended, or exalted: not Christ, only as the Son of God, or the head of angels: not Christ, as the creator of the world, or by whom all things consist: but Christ, as answering the terms of the first covenant: as disarming justice; and this he did, as a sacrifice. By this he bore the curse; by this he broke down the partition wall; by this he joined apostate man and an offended God. This is what true faith pitcheth on, daily revolves, and daily applies to. This is the *first* object of the soul, Christ made sin; Christ bearing the punishment; Christ substituted in the room of the offender. This is that which pacifies God; and only that which pacifies God can pacify the conscience."+

Is it congruous, then, to suppose, that a criminal, when seeking pardon of sin and peace for his conscience, must necessarily apply for them under the notion of his previously possessing a pious turn of heart? Yet, whoever is persuaded, that any degree of holiness is absolutely necessary to warrant his believing in Jesus, cannot but regard the atonement, if, consistently with his principles, he ever do regard it, under the notion of his being possessed of the requisite sanctity. Were the

<sup>\*</sup> On Justification, Chap. III. † Works, Vol. II. p. 549.

atonement of Christ entirely rejected, and were he revealed as willing to assist only the weak, but well disposed, in saving themselves; then, indeed, it might be esteemed rational to conclude, that whoever is authorised to depend on him for help, must be well qualified, by holy inclinations and strenuous exertions. But, for those who consider the death of Christ as vicarious and expiatory; or as constituting the only ground of hope for pardon and peace; to maintain, the necessity of holiness as warranting our dependence on that very death, is extremely inconsistent. For, according to the sentiment opposed, though the death of Jesus be, confessedly, an atonement; and though, by the very nature of the case, it could be intended for none but the guilty; yet, before any of that criminal character be permitted to regard it with affiance, they must be holy.

As no one can be thoroughly persuaded, that, in order to faith in Christ for pardon and acceptance, an holy disposition is absolutely necessary, without being anxiously concerned to obtain the important requisite; so, no sooner does he consider himself as possessing that requisite, than it becomes to him the primary source of peace. Yes, his first encouragement and hope arise, -not from the atonement of Christ; not from revealed mercy; nor from the testimony of God concerning his incarnate son, and the work performed by him; -but, from the change which has taken place in his own heart; from the holy tendency of his will; from the difference which subsists between himself and others, that are altogether unworthy. Conscious that some degree of moral worth attaches to his character, and considering this as previously necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Christ; his first hope is derived, not from divine grace, as revealed in the gospel; but from his own holiness, as required by the LAW: which is directly contrary to the grand principles of evangelical truth.

Our Lord says as Moses lifted up the serpent in the

the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.\* Now here, it is evident, our divine instructor teaches us to consider the dying state of the Israelites, that were bitten by the fiery serpents, as an emblem of our perishing condition by sin: the brazen serpent, elevated on a pole, as a type of himself expiring on the cross: the looking of wounded Israelites to the brazen serpent, as emblematical of condemned sinners depending on his own death; and the perfect recovery obtained, by viewing the artificial serpent, as emblematical of that salvation which is through faith in his atoning blood. To this, perhaps, there may be an allusion, when Jehovah says; look unto ME, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.† We may infer, however, that as the wounded Israelites, without any preparative, except a sense of danger beso denominated, were authorised to look at the brazen serpent, with an expectation of complete recovery; so sinners, while destitute of every holy qualification, and as impelled by an apprehension of eternal ruin, are warranted to

believe in Jesus Christ, with hope of complete salvation.

Very emphatical is the language, and exceedingly rich is the grace which appears, in the following passage. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dure to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.‡ In the work of redemption by Jesus our Lord, there are two particulars on account of which the love of God to men is principally celebrated by the inspired writers: which particulars are, the

<sup>\*</sup> John iii 14, 15.
† Isa. xlv. 22. "Faith in Christ crucified," says Dr. Owen, "is a looking unto him, [Isa. xlv 22. lxv 1.] Answering their looking unto the brazen serpent, who were stung with fiery serpents, John iii. 14 15." On Justification. General Considerations.

<sup>‡</sup> Rom. v 6, 7, 8,

sending of his only begotten son, and the delivering him up to death for SINNERS.\* It is to the latter of these that Paul directs our attention, in the text before us. Here we have a mode of expression that is very uncommon; and, considering of whom the apostle speaks, it is truly wonderful; God COMMENDETH his love! He exhibits its brightest beauties; he presents to our view its most winning attractives; he displays it in the most surprising and charming point of light. As if he should say; "such is my love! So free, so fervent, so fruitful of benefits, and so becoming my infinite excellence, that I consider the manifestation of it, as the chief glory of all my ways respecting the sons of men! to whom I RECOMMEND it, in a peculiar manner, as the eternal source of their happiness, and as the principal subject of their delightful meditation." God commendeth his love TOWARD US. Wonderful saying! That reasonable creatures ought ever to consider divine benevolence as the fountain of their felicity, is plain to every thinking person: but that the most high should speak of RECOMMENDING his love, even though it were to angels, is truly amazing! How much more wonderful, then, to hear him speak of commending his love to MEN-to polluted mortals-to criminals, who deserve perdition!

But how, or in what way, does the Supreme commend his own philanthropy? Not by passing an act of indemnity in favor of those who loathe sin, and love holiness. Not by justifying those who have performed qualifying conditions, and by giving heaven to saints. Nor does he recommend his love to men, in pardoning their offences, accepting their persons, and bestowing immortal happiness upon them, by the mere exertion of his royal prerogative and supreme dominion. No: respecting these particulars, the admirable text is entirely silent. But it was by sending his own son, and by giving him up to death for us, when we were yet

<sup>\*</sup> John iii 16. Matt. xxi 37. Rom. viii 32. 1 John iii 16.

without strength, to perform any thing truly good; while we were yet sinners, or entirely destitute of every amiable quality; and while we were absolutely ungodly in the turn of our hearts, and the course of our lives. In other words, a detestable compound of depravity and guilt, of weakness and unworthiness. Of such a nature is that apostate state in which we were, when God commended his love to us, by the gift of his incarnate son; and by Jesus falling a victim, in our stead to

eternal justice!

Again:-It is worthy of observation, that Paul does not say, God commends his mercy, or his grace; but, which is yet more emphatical, delightful, and wonderful, his LOVE. It deserves also to be remarked, that the father's giving or sending of his own son, and the voluntary death of Jesus for us, are most commonly ascribed to the LOVE, not the mercy or the grace, of the father, and of the son:\* but the blessings bestowed for the sake of Christ, are more commonly represented as flowing from grace or mercy. Mercy, grace, and love, are different modifications of goodness; which may be thus distinguished. Mercy, is goodness to the miserable; grace, is goodness to the unworthy; and love, is goodness delighting in the happiness of its objects. When God has completely delivered his people from all the penal effects of their apostacy, they will no longer be the objects of his goodness, under the strict notion of mercy; because mercy has regard to misery. When they are perfectly free from all the unworthiness attending depravity and guilt, they will no longer be the objects of divine goodness, under the apostolic notion of grace: † for grace, in the writings of Paul, respects the unworthiness of a sinful creature. But saints will ever be the blessed objects of divine goodness, under the delightful notion of LOVE. Holy angels are the objects of divine goodness under the notion of love;

<sup>\*</sup> John iii 16. 1 John iii 16. iv. 9, 10. Gal. ii 20 Eph. v 2, 25. Rev. i 5. † Rom. iii 24. iv 4. ix 5, 6. Eph. ii 5—9.

but not of mercy, or of grace, in the apostolic sense of those terms, when used respecting sinners.

Relative to this distinction, Dr. Goodwin says; love is "a desire to communicate good, the chiefest good, unto the creature; but mercy, it is to pull the creature out of a depth of misery—so that mercy superaddeth this to love, that it respects the creature in misery. Parents, they love their children, simply as they are their children; but if they be fallen into misery, then love works in a way of pity. It is not mercy only,—but [the apostle] also mentioneth love;—because that mercy only respecteth misery as I said before: it goes mercy only respecteth misery, as I said before: it goes no further, simply as mercy, than the relieving those that are in misery. Mercy causeth a king to pardon a traitor: but if he shall take this traitor and advance him to the highest dignity, place him with him in the throne, as it were; this must needs be from love too; this is superadding, in that respect, unto mercy. God's love, it is the greatest thing of all the rest; it is more than all his benefits. The love of Christ was more than his sufferings; and his sufferings were more than his benefits: and the love of God, it is more than all his gifts, yet he hath given great things to us, and done great things for us. Amor est primum donum; his love is the first gift, as one well saith: in the gift of which all things else are yours. The gift of his son, it was a great gift; but it was founded in his love. He so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son. Though we, being sinners, need mercy, (that is the next thing we want) and therefore we look to it, O mercy, mercy! because we apprehend ourselves in misery: but do you look beyond mercy, and look to love; which is a greater thing to you than mercy; raiseth and enlargeth mercy; and, when mercy hath done with you, will do more, or as much for you as mercy hath done, and guideth mercy. Love is a desire to communicate good unto us—mercy respecteth us as we are fallen into sin and misery—and then that of grace,—it

adds but this, a freeness unto both. Love and mercy freely bestowed, that is called grace, in either."\*

Mr. Charnock, thus: "Love is a perfection of a

higher strain than mercy: mercy may be prevalent, where love is absent. This [goodness of God] under the name of his love, is rendered [or given as] the sole cause of the redeeming death of the son: it was to com-MEND his love with the highest gloss, and in so singular a manner that had not its parrallel in nature, nor in all his other works, and reaches in the brightness of it, beyond the manifested extent of any other attribute. It must only be a miraculous goodness that induced him to expose the life of his son to those difficulties in the world, and death upon the cross, for the freedom of sordid rebels. His great end was, to give such a demonstration of the liberality of his nature as might be attractive to his creature, remove its shakings and tremblings, and encourage its approaches to him. It is in this he would not only manifest his love, but assume the name of LOVE. By this name the Holy Ghost calls him in relation to this good will manifested in his son: God is LOVE. In this is manifested the love of God towards us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him. He would take the name he never expressed himself in before. He was Jehovah, in regard of the truth of his promise: so he expressed himself of old. He is good-NESS, in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the mission of his son: and therefore he would be known by the name of LOVE now, in the days of the gospel."t

If, then, the highest demonstration of divine favor; that which, in the estimate of God himself, is the grand recommendation of his love to men; consist in his giving Jesus to die for us while we were yet sinners, ungodly, and without strength; we may safely conclude, that the sentiment opposed cannot be to the praise of the glory of his grace. For, how incongruous it is to \*On Eph. ii 4—6. Works Vol. I. Part II pp. 129, 130, 132, 138. ‡ Works Vol. II. p. 333. Vol. I. Discourse on the goodness of God.

suppose, that though the blessed God recommend his love to us, considered as mere sinners; and though it is in Christ only, as dying for mere sinners, that the admirably glorious properties of divine love are to be seen; yet, before those very sinners for whom Christ died, and to whom God recommends his love, are permitted to believe in Jesus, and to behold the wonderful excellencies of that amazing love, they must have some degree of spiritual strength—they must become godly -they must be real saints! for all these ideas attach to every one that posess the least measure of true holiness. God, in the death of Jesus, recommends his love to sinners, or the ungodly; yet they must cease to be such before they regard it! Should any persons of so base a character presume to approach the dying Jesus as their only hope, the ungracious genius of that princi-ple against which I contend cries in their ears, procul ô, procul este profani : hence, far hence, O ye profane.

Had the glorious God been represented as recommending his love to the penitent, the upright, the virtuous; we might have concluded, that none but persons of those amiable characters were authorised to regard Christ with dependence, and with expectation. But, had that been the case, the love of God to us could not, with propriety, have been so contrasted, as it is here, with the love of one man to another. For sinners love those that love them; \* and the apostle admits, that, for a good man, some one perhaps may even dare to die. Besides, on that supposition, the divine father might have been viewed, and would certainly have been considered by distressed souls, as commending his love to rectitude, to virtue, to holiness, rather than to sinners; and the absolutely unworthy would have had no ground of hope. Whereas, if Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; and if God, by that very fact, more than by any other effect of divine goodness, commend his love to us; we ought, surely, to consider the eternal

father as recommending the crucified Jesus to us, while we are yet sinners—recommending him, as an all-sufficient saviour for the most guilty; as perfectly suitable to the circumstances of the most needy; and as completely free for the most unworthy. Thus he is revealed in the glad tidings: and what is believing in Jesus, but relying upon him, or treating him, according to this view of his character? God himself, in the death of Christ, commending his love to mere sinners; the ungodly must be warranted thankfully to regard that recommendation, and to believe in the Son of God.

Christ is made sanctification to all that are truly converted.\* Every holy disposition, therefore, in the heart of a sinner must be received from him. Ought we, then, to support the affirmative of what is opposed, to consider our Lord as actually made sanctification to any sinner, who is not authorised to believe in him? or imagine that an ungodly person must receive holiness from Jesus Christ, in order to warrant his dependence upon him? So to do, would confound the state of believers with that of unbelievers; would invert the order of things in the method of grace, and be attended with various absurdities. Does the Most Holy sanctify any sinner? it is as the God of peace: † but he bears that delightful character, only as reconciling the world to himself by the death of Christ. For, as Mr. Charnock observes, "God only sanctifies as a God of peace. Would we be perfect in every good work; would we do the will of God; would we have every thing well-pleasing in his sight wrought in us? then we should go to him as a God of peace." # "Sanctification," says Dr. Owen, "is a fruit and effect of that peace with [God,] which he hath made and prepared for us, by Jesus Christ. For he was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, destroying the enmity which entered by sin, and laying the foundation of eternal peace. From hence it is, that he will sanctify us, or make us holy; without a respect whereunto he would no more

1 Cor. i 30. † 1 Thess. v 23: ‡Heb. xiii 20, 21. Works Vol. p. 222.

do so, than he will sanctify again the angels that have sinned; for whom there is no peace made, nor atonement."\* Must it not be necessary, then, for sinners to regard the atonement of Christ as all-sufficient, in which the divine father appears under that gracious character, the God of peace; in order to a well-grounded expectation of ever possessing the least degree of true holiness? Coming to Christ, and believing on him, are the same

thing; as appears from the words of our Lord himself. He that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst. † Now, the scripture informs us, that the wrath of God, or the curse of the law, abides on him who believes not in Christ.‡ But will the bible authorise our supposing, that any one possessed of true holiness is under the wrath of God? Yet that is evidently implied in the hypothesis here opposed, when compared with the awful declara-

tion just produced.

Our Lord says, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. According to the phraseology of scripture, to be in Christ, most commonly denotes vital union with him, acceptance before God, and complete freedom from condemnation. Privileges, these, which are not enjoyed by unbelievers. No; there must be faith in the blood of Jesus, before any one can be justly considered as thus united to him, and thus accepted of God. If, notwithstanding, the reverse of what I maintain be true, there not only may, but there absolutely must be the fruits of righteousness, before there can be vital union with Christ: nay, before a sinner can be permitted to regard the gospel, as revealing a saviour in whom he may confide. Because, in whomsoever an holy disposition is implanted, it will, more or less, exert itself in pious affections, and righteous conduct: which must be considered in the light of spiritual *fruit*.

<sup>\*</sup> Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, B. IV. Chap. I § 8. † John vi 35. ‡ John iii. 36. § John xv 4. #2 Cor. v 17. Eph. i 6. ¶ Rom. iii, 25.

I said, vital union; like that of a living branch to a flourishing vine. For, so far as I have observed, it is allowed by all who are conversant in these affairs, that, previous to believing in Jesus Christ, there is no such union between him and any sinner.

The scriptures teach us to consider all unbelievers as in a state of enmity to God, and of spiritual death. To the unbelieving, we are also informed, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.\* The affirmative, however, of what I deny, supposes that sinners must be alive to God—the friends of God—and have some degree of spiritual purity, before they obtain permission to believe in Jesus. For I think it is demonstrable, that he in whose heart any holy disposition resides, is neither under the dominion of disaffection to God, nor in spiritual death, nor destitute of spiritual

purity.

Under whatever characters Christ is represented as considering his people, with reference to their legal and moral state, when he gave himself a ransom for them; under the very same characters are unconverted persons warranted to believe in him. For we cannot suppose, without absurdity, that Christ died for men under one character, and that they must depend upon his death under another. Now it is plain, from the records of inspiration, that those whom Christ came to save, and for whom he died, were considered by him, as guiltyas ungodly—as enemies to God—as extremely depraved—as the chief of sinners—as justly condemned—and as lost. † Consequently, such being their native characters, and such their awful state, they must believe in him at first, not as qualified persons, but as perishing wretches; not as adorned with the beauties of holiness, but as loathsome with the pollution of hell. How strange, how incongruous, the following position: Christ came, and expired on a cross professedly to save sin-

<sup>+ 1</sup> Tim. i. 15. Rom. v 6, 8, 9, 10. John iii 3, 5. Titus iii 3. Gal. iii 10, 13. Luke xix 10.

ners—the ungodly—the enemies of God, and so on; yet, before any of them can warrantably believe in him for salvation, they must be under the influence of a pious disposition—they must possess a principle of universal holiness! In other words, they must cease to be, in a scriptural sense, those characters which Christ intended to relieve, when he gave himself a ransom for many—when he was made sin, and made a curse; before they are authorised to place the least confidence in him!

I said, in a scriptural sense: because they who possess the least degree of true holiness, are not, either in the Old or New Testament, denominated, absolutely, sinners, the ungodly, the lost, and so on; but the reverse. Yes, notwithstanding their numerous and criminal imperfections, with regard to inherent holiness and personal obedience; they are characterised—those that know the Lord—fear the Lord—love the Lord—serve the Lord—the righteous—the upright—the perfect: disciples, believers, faithful brethren, sons of God, saints, and so on. For every one that possesses any measure of real holiness, is born of God; and is, therefore, denominated according to his new state, even while he perceives abundant reason for daily abasement before God.\*

It was the design of our Lord, in his admirable parable of the Prodigal, and in that of the Publican,† to inform us, under what character, or under what consideration of ourselves, we must apply to God for pardon, for peace, and for salvation. What, then, are the most prominent features of those two parabolical persons, when viewed as coming to God for acceptance? The Prodigal appears as a ragged, filthy, starving wretch; who, impelled by mere necessity, returns to his father, without any recommendation of person, or of character;

<sup>\*</sup> Job i 1, 8. ix. 20, 21, 30, 31 · xl. 4. xlii 5, 6. Ps. cxxx 3, 4. cxliii 2. Prov. xxiv. 16. Rom. vii 15. viii 1, 2. 1 John i 8, 9, 10. † Luke xv 11—32. xviii 10—14.

and as deserving to be for ever exheridated. The Publican, smitten with a sense of enormous guilt; far from considering himself as possessing any holy disposition; and harrassed with apprehensions of eternal ruin; appears as a criminal who deserves to be damned, and who dares not lift up his eyes to heaven, even when he cries for mercy through an atonement. Surely, then, these characters, and the scope of these parables, are far from teaching, that sinners must have some degree of holiness before they be authorised to believe in Jesus. Nay, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, our Lord so describes the former as to show, that whoever approaches God, with a view to justification before him, under any other character than that of a miserable sinner; or as encouraged by any other consideration, than that of mercy revealed in the atonement; is chargeable with self-righteous pride, and sure to meet

with a fatal disappointment.

I said, with a view to justification before God: for this is the single point under consideration. Because it was that for which our Lord represents the Pharisee and Publican, as addressing the Most High; and because it is that which an awakened sinner principally seeks, in his first application to Jesus Christ. Has a person believed through grace? has he already received the atonement? and is he approaching the throne of divine mercy for a fresh application of pardon, with reference to the imperfection of his duties, the daily operation of his corruptions, and the backslidings of which he is conscious? Or, does he apply for larger measures of sanctifying influence? he may come to God as one of his disobedient children, or as a feeble and very imperfect follower of Jesus Christ, crying, Abba, Father. Nay, when lamenting over his indwelling depravity and actual transgressions, he may even say; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, that are profligates in their conduct; that are dead in sin; or that are seeking to establish their own righteousness. For the Pharisee, in this parable, is not censured, merely because he thanked God for the difference which subsisted between himself, and the profligate part of the world; but because he placed that difference to the account of his justification before God. In that respect, the chaste lady, and the vile prostitute; the most virtuous characters, and the greatest profligates, are completely on a level; having only one common ground of hope—the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ.

It must, I think, be granted, that when a sinner first believes in Jesus, he is concerned chiefly about pardon and acceptance with God. But, if so, the spirit of those instructive parables to which I advert, absolutely forbids our supposing, that any degree of holiness is required of a sinner, to warrant his dependence on Christ. will, however, for the sake of argument, admit the contrary. We will suppose that a sinner, under a persuasion of his possessing some degree of true sanctity, applies to the glorious Jesus; and that he addresses God in prayer, for justification, agreeably to this view of himself. What, then, will be the spirit of his address at the throne of eternal majesty? Must it not, either expressly or implicitly, be as follows? "God, I thank thee, that I am not as the multitude of other men! Once, indeed, I lived in disobedience, and loved sin: but now it is otherwise, as to the turn of my heart, and the course of my life. Having a pious disposition, my will is under an holy bias; which leads me to revere thy authority, and to keep thy commands. Thus possessing the requisite divinely prescribed to all those that would acceptably believe in Jesus, and through his merits obtain justification; I cannot doubt, either of acceptance with thee, or of admission into thy eternal kingdom." This present the simple of the state of the simple of the state of the simple of the state of kingdom." This, or something similar, is the genuine language of every one who, in his devotional addresses relative to justification, proceeds on that ungracious principle which I oppose! There is reason to think, however, that many who warmly dispute for the principle, entirely desert it in prayer; and would even be shocked to hear a religious address to the deity, respecting justification, formed upon it. But, if the principle in question be an article of divine truth, it must be of great importance: for it enters deeply into the doctrine of justification. Why should it not, then, by all that embrace it, be avowed in their solemn prayers for pardon and acceptance, especially by those who, with the Pharisee, consider themselves as possessing the requisite holiness? Why does it not make a conspicuous appearance in their devotional practice? To scruple the propriety of such an avowal, is an implicit condemna-

tion of the principle itself.

Remarkably pertinent, relative to this particular, is the following language of Dr. Owen. The Pharisee ascribes "all that he did to God. God I thank thee: although he did all [he mentions,] yet he owned the aid and assistance of God, by his grace, in it all. He esteemed himself much to differ from other men, but he ascribed it not unto himself that so he did. All the righteousness and holiness which he laid claim unto, he ascribed unto the benignity and goodness of God. Wherefore he neither pleaded any merit in his works, nor any works performed in his own strength, without the aid of grace. All that he pretends is, that by the grace of God he had fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and thereon expected to be justified. And whatever words men shall be pleased to make use of in their vocal prayers, God interprets their minds according to what they trust in, as unto their justification before him. And if some men will be true to their own principles, this [prayer of the Pharisee] is the prayer which, mutatis, mutandis, they ought to make."\*

Paul when proving the doctrine of justification, by

Paul when proving the doctrine of justification, by an imputed righteousness, and when adducing the case of Abraham as quite in point, thus interrogates and replies; how was it (the patriarch's faith, or that in

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, Chap. XVII.

which he believed) then reckoned? When he was in circumcision? Or in uncircumcision? Not in circircumcision? Or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.\* The apostle's design in these queries and answers was to evince, that justification before God is of mere grace, by an imputed righteousness; and that no duty performed by us, nor any holiness wrought in us, has the least influence in procuring that inestimable blessing. Adopting the inspired writer's manner of speaking, I may, therefore, interrogate and answer thus:—How, then, is the vicarious obedience of Christ imputed to a sinner? When he is possessed of true holiness? Or when he is considered as ungodlu? Not when in the former, but while dered as ungodly? Not when in the former, but while in the latter state: for the text is express, he that justifieth the ungodly.† Consequently, no degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant our believing in Jesus Christ: because it would be absurd to consider any person as ungodly, who possesses the least measure of real holiness.

of real holiness.

They who are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick; is a maxim of common sense, as well as of scripture. Now Christ is the physician of souls, whose disease consists in depravity and guilt. To suppose, therefore, that sinners must possess any measure of true holiness, before they are warranted to believe in Jesus; is equally incongruous as to maintain, that a patient must be in a convalescent state, before he can, with propriety, apply to a physician. For, I presume it must be admitted, that when any sinner becomes possessed of holy inclinations, he is, in a moral sense, convalescent. His recovery is begun: and taking the doctrine of perseverance for granted, certain to be completed. But is it congruous to suppose, that any sinner should have substantial reason to conclude upon his own final happiness, as the sentiment opposed im-

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. iv 10.

plies, before he be authorised to believe in Jesus Christ 2

The scripture teacheth, that real holiness is the fruit of evangelical truth understood and received.\* But the sentiment against which I contend implies, either, that the gospel may be received, without relying on Christ; or, that holiness may exist in the heart of a sinner, who does not believe the truth: neither of which can be supported by the word of God. Not the former: for the genuine gospel is the testimony of God concerning Christ. It is a revelation, and an exhibition, of his person and offices; of his grace and work.† He therefore, who receives the gospel, or admits the glad tidings into his heart; t receives Christ himself. who is the substance of those joyful tidings. Not the latter: for while a person disbelieves that which, by way of eminence, is called THE TRUTH, he remains disaffected to God, and virtually makes him a liar. | It may be safely concluded, therefore, that such an one has no holiness in him.

The most remarkably gracious proclamations and invitations to sinners, that stand recorded by the inspired pen, may here be pleaded. Proclamations:-Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money! Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price! and so on. Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink! Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens : she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the

<sup>\*</sup>Matt. xiii 23. John xvii 17, 19. Eph. iv 24. Gr. † Gal. iii 1. ‡ Rom. vi 17. x 10. Acts viii 37. § John i 11, 12. Col. ii 6. || 1 John v 10.

<sup>†</sup> Gal. iii 1. ‡ R § John i 11, 12. Col. ii 6.

wine which I have mingled.\* Invitations:—Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind—go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in—come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The Spirit and the bride say, come: and let him that heareth say, come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.† To these proclamations and invitations, that gracious promise may be annexed; him that cometh

to me, I will in no wise cast out. ‡

On reviewing the divinely gracious proclamations, invitations, and promise, just adduced, we observe the following descriptive characters: every one that thirsteth after happiness, and seeks it-not in Christ, and in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings provided by sovereign mercy; but, in the pursuit of sensual gratifications, of temporal riches, of secular honors, of philosophical acquisitions, of superstitious observances, or of acceptance with God by his own righteousness; which are not bread, and cannot satisfy. & He that hath no money; no recommending qualification, or moral worth-the simple, and those that are void of understanding; the ignorant and wicked—the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; mere mendicants, that are in the streets and lanes of the city—those, in the country, that are in the highways, and under the hedges; travellers, without exception, and the most miserable vagrants-those, finally, that are burdened with guilt, and have sought relief, in methods of their own devising, but have not found it.

We further observe, with surprise and joy, that our divine Lord, far from overlooking these outcasts of society and refuse of mankind, gives the following order

<sup>\*</sup> Isa. Iv. 1—3. John vii 37. Prov. ix 1—5.
† Luke xiv 21, 23. Matt. xi 28. Rev. xxii 17. ‡ John vi 37.
§ Vide Vitringam in Jesaiam, 55, 1—3. Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Vol. III p. 338. Mr. T. Boston's Works, pp. 227, 845.

to his ministering servants; compel them, by forcible arguments and winning persuasion, to come in, and be guests at my table. Or, as it is elegantly expressed by an evangelical writer; "the messengers are sent, not to the mansion-houses of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty; but to the highways and hedges: where misery mourns, and poverty pines, and baseness hides her head." Nay, the SUPREME LORD himself, as it were in person, condescends, to address the suilty the imin person, condescends to address the guilty, the impoverished, the perishing creatures; and his language is, "ho, every one! be his iniquities ever so many, his depravity ever so great, or his guilt ever so enormous. Come to the waters; to the source of supplies, where plenty is provided for the use of those that are starving. Come and take freely, of the wine, and the milk, and the water of life—of all the blessings provided by grace, for the relief of spiritual indigence, for the peace of distressed consciences, and for the healing of diseased poverty and rags, your crimes and your guilt, prohibit access to the storehouse of spiritual blessings, or forbid expectation of being relieved by reigning grace. For I solemnly assure you, that all the benefits of sovereign mercy were intended, only for the guilty—the depraved—the utterly destitute—for those only, who have nothing but the revolution of the guilty—the depraved thing but the revolution of the guilty—the depraved thing but the revolution of the guilty—the depraved the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the depraved the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the depraved the guilty—the guilty—the depraved the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the guilty—the depraved —the guilty—the guilty—the depraved —the guilty—the guilty—t thing but the revelation of my grace, to keep them from despair now; nor any thing besides the provisions of that grace, to preserve them from damnation hereafter. Whoever, therefore, on the credit of my royal proclamation, or on the fidelity of my irrevocable promise, applies for relief, shall not, upon any consideration of his past provocations, or of his present pollution, be rejected. Rejected! nothing less. For, to the praise of the glory of my grace, he shall find acceptance, and have salvation."

To maintain that a sinner, before he can warrantably believe in Jesus, must have some degree of holiness,

<sup>\*</sup> Hervey, Theron and Aspasio, Vol. III. p. 311.

is contrary to the apostolic doctrine of justification before God. To this particular I have, indeed, repeatedly adverted: but it is of so much importance as to deserve a more distinct consideration. The principle, then, is inconsistent with the apostolic doctrine of justification by mere grace; with the character of those whom God justifies; and is adapted to encourage boast-

ing.

It is inconsistent with justification by MERE GRACE. Relative to this affair, the language of inspiration is, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.\* No words, equally few, could more strongly express the most perfectly gratui-tous justification of a sinner, than these, FREELY, by his GRACE, and it is an axiom with Paul, that whatever blessing is of GRACE, it is not of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: and that, whatever blessing is of works, it is not of grace; otherwise work is no more work.† Nor ought it here to be objected, either, that the sentiment censured, respects not exterior conduct, but the state of the heart: or, that the holiness intended is an effect of divine grace. Not the former: for what is exterior conduct, respecting the affairs of religion, in which the heart is not right with God? It may satisfy the person himself; it may please his neighbors; satisfy the person himself; it may please his neighbors; it may be hypocrisy; but it is not righteousness. Not the latter: for the Pharisee in the parable, even when pleading his own righteousness for justification, thanked God for preserving and assisting grace. † "No words can be found out," says Dr. Owen, "to free our justification before God from all respect unto any thing in ourselves, but only what is added expressly as the means of its participation on our part, through faith in his blood, more emphatical than those here used by the apostle & Experity by his grace. And with whom this apostle, FREELY by his GRACE. And with whom this is not admitted as exclusive of all works or obedience of our own; of all conditions, preparations, and merit;

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. iii 24. † Rom. xi 6. ‡ Luke xviii 11. § Rom. iii. 24.

I shall despair of ever expressing my conceptions about it intelligibly unto them."\*

With the CHARACTER of those whom God justifies. Thus it is described by the apostle: to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. He that worketh not—the ungodly: such
is the character of him that believes in Jesus, and
whom God graciously justifies! But if the mere sinner
be not authorised to believe in Jesus; if any degree
of holiness be previously necessary to faith in him; I
do not perceive how it can be considered as a fact, that God justifies him who worketh not, or any that are ungodly. Let us again hear Dr. Owen; expressing himself as follows; "to say, he who worketh not, is justified through believing; is to say, that his works, whatever they be, have no influence into his justification; nor hath God, in justifying him, any respect unto them. Wherefore he alone who worketh not is the subject of justification; the person to be justified. That is, God considereth no man's works, no man's duties of obedience, in his justification; seeing we are justified freely by his grace. And when God affirmeth expressly, that he justifieth him who worketh not, and that freely by his grace; I cannot understand what place our works, or duties, of obedience, can have in our justification. For why should we trouble ourselves to invent of what consideration they may be, in our justification before God, when he himself affirms that they are of none at all? Neither are the words capable of any evading interpretation. He that worketh not, is he that worketh not, let men say what they please, and distinguish as long as they will. And it is a boldness not to be justified, for any to rise up in opposition to such express divine testimonies, however they may be harnessed with philosophical notions and arguings; which are but as

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, Chap. VI. 1 Rom. iv 4, 5.

thorns and briars which the word of God will pass

through and consume."

"But the apostle further adds, in the description of the subject of justification, that God justifieth the un-godly. This is that expression which hath stirred up so much wrath among many, and on account whereof some seem to be much displeased with the apostle himself. If any other person dare but say, that God self. If any other person dare but say, that God justifieth the ungodly; he is presently reflected on as one that, by his doctrine, would overthrow the necessity of godliness, holiness, obedience, or good works. For what need can there be of any of them, if God justifieth the ungodly? Howbeit, this is a periphrasis of God, that he, is he who justifieth the ungodly. This is his prerogative and property. As such he will be believed and worshipped; which adds weight and emphasis unto the expression: and we must not forego this testimony of the Holy Ghost, let men be as angry as they please. But the difference is about the meaning of the words. If so, it may be allowed without mutual offence, though we should mistake their proper sense. offence, though we should mistake their proper sense. Only it must be granted, that God justifieth the ungodly. That is, say some, those who formerly were ungodly; not such who continue ungodly when they are justified: and this is most true. All that are justified, were before ungodly: and all that are justified, are at the same instant made godly. But the question is, whether they are godly or ungodly, antecedently, in any moment of time, unto their justification? If they are considered as godly, and are so indeed, then the appeals? as godly, and are so indeed, then the apostle's words are not true, that God justifieth the ungodly: for the contradictory proposition is true, God justifieth none but the godly. Wherefore, although in, and with, the justification of a sinner, he is made godly; for he is endowed with that faith which purifieth the heart, and is a vital principle of all obedience, and the conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Christ; yet, antecedently unto his justification, he is ungodly, and

considered as ungodly; as one who worketh not; as one whose duties and obedience contribute nothing to his justification. As he worketh not, all works are excluded from being the cause; and as he is ungodly, from being the condition, of his justification—not this, or that sort of works; not this, or that manner of the performance of them; not this, or that kind of interest in our justification; but all works of what sort soever, and however performed, are excluded from any kind of consideration in our justification, as our works or duties of obedience." obedience."

obedience."

"It will be said, that our personal obedience is by none asserted to be the righteousness whereby we are justified before God, in the same Manner as it was under the covenant of works. But the argument speaks, not as unto the manner, or way, whereby it is so; but to the thing itself. If it be so in any way or manner, under what qualifications soever, we are under that covenant still. If it be of works any way, it is not of grace at all. All is now resolved into the merit of Christ, upon the account whereof alone, our own personal righteousness is accepted before God unto our justification. The question is not, on what account, nor for what reason, it is so accepted; but whether it be, or no: seeing its so being is effectually constitutive of a covenant of works."\*

The sentiment is adapted to encourage boasting.

The sentiment is adapted to encourage boasting. This, however, is directly contrary to the apostolic doctrine. For Paul assures us, that, by God's method of justifying sinners, all boasting, even in comparative worthiness, is entirely, and for ever excluded. Thus he interrogates and determines: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith—by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, Chap. XVIII, XIII.

man should boast."\* According to the doctrine of Paul, a justified sinner, with reference to the moment preceding his justification, has no more ground to think well of his personal qualifications, or to applaud his own exertions, relative to that affair; than his unhappy neighbor has, who is dying under a curse, and sinking into final ruin. But, admitting that any degree of holiness be necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Christ, it must be so to justification through faith in his blood: because it is in virtue of personal sanctity that he is qualified for believing; and, consequently, for the imputation of our Lord's vicarious obedience to him. His own righteousness being thus essentially necessary, must share in the honor of his justification. Surely, then, whoever is thus prepared for the benefit of an imputed righteousness, must have in comparison with others that are not so qualified, cause of boasting.

For, as Dr. Owen argues, "if we are in any sense justified [by our personal righteousness] in the sight of God, we have whereof to boast before him. We may not have so absolutely, and with respect to merit; yet we have so comparatively, and in respect of others, who cannot make the same plea for their justification. But all boasting is excluded: and it will not relieve, to say, that this personal righteousness is of the free grace and gift of God unto some, and not unto others; for we must plead it as our duty, and not as God's graceboasting is excluded. Apparent it is from hence, and from what the apostle affirms concerning Abraham, + that a great part, at least, of the controversy he had about justification, was, whether it did admit of any καυχησις or καυχημα, in those that are justified? Boasting, in our language is the name of a vice, and is never taken in a good sense. But καυχησις, or καυχημα, the words used by the apostle, are of an indifferent signification; and, as they are applied, may denote a virtue, as well as a

<sup>+</sup> Rom. iii 21, 27. Eph. ii. 8, 9.

vice. So they do, Heb. iii. 6.\* But always, and in all places, they respect something that is peculiar in, or unto, whom they are ascribed. Wherever any thing is ascribed unto one, and not unto another, with respect unto any good end, there is a fundamentum κανηχοτως a foundation for boasting All this, saith the apostle, in the matter of our justification, is utterly excluded. But wherever respect is had unto any condition or quali-fication, in one more than another, especially if it be of works; it giveth a ground of boasting, as he affirmeth, Rom. iv. 2. And it appears, from comparing that verse with this, [Rom. iii. 27.] that wherever there is any influence of our own works into our own justification, there is a ground of boasting. But, in evangelical justification, no such boasting in any kind can be admitted. Wherefore, there is no place for works, in our justification before God: for if there were, it is impossible but a καυχημα, [boasting,] in one kind or other, before God or man, must be admitted. † I have enlarged the more on this particular, that the reader may perceive how nearly the principle opposed relates to the doctrine of justification; and how much this capital doctrine is corrupted by that principle.

Once more: Supposing it necessary for every sinner to possess more, or less, of true holiness, before he be authorised to believe in Christ; it is hard to conceive how any one ever can believe in him. This, perhaps, may appear by the following considerations. Whoever believes in Jesus, relies on him as redeeming sinners from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No one, therefore, depends upon him, till convinced of sin, and apprehensive of danger. Now, as nothing but sin exposes men to present condemnation, and final ruin; so it is that only which renders them filthy, and vile, and worthless. The more any one, therefore, feels his want of deliverance from the wrath to come; the more keenly

<sup>\*</sup> See also Rom. xv. 17. 1 Cor. i 31. Gal. vi 14 with many other places t Doctrine of Justification, Chap. VI.

sensible he must be of his complicated guilt, his great baseness, and his absolute unworthiness, in the sight of While, consequently, he is persuaded, that some degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant his reliance on Jesus Christ; he must either labor to reform his life, to amend his heart, and to obtain some righteousness of his own, as the pedestal on which to stand when laying hold of Christ, or sink in despair: and, in either case, he is far from believing on the Son of God. Thus, while earnestly desiring an interest in Christ, and considering himself as destitute of the requisite holiness, he, as the prophet speaks, labors in the very fire, and wearies himself for very vanity. Having such views of himself, and of the character under which only he is warranted to believe in Jesus; neither the gospel, with its cheering declarations; nor the Mediator, with his immense fulness of blessings and of grace, can afford him the least relief; they being quite out of his reach. Because, till conscious of an holy disposition, or a pious turn of heart, he neither does, nor can consider himself as one toward whom the gospel wears a smiling aspect; or as authorised to take the least encouragement from it. On the hypothesis opposed, therefore, nothing but embarrassment, and painful disappointment, are likely to attend him. But were he, by strenuous efforts, to obtain a persuasion, that his inclinations have taken a virtuous turn; that his internal character is greatly improved; and, under this consideration of himself, to conclude, that now he may believe in Jesus Christ; what must be thought of his conduct? Why, that he is ignorant of the gospel; that he is of the works of the law; \* and, that the pains he has taken have produced a good conceit of himself, rather than prepared him for faith in Jesus Christ. inimical to solid peace and real holiness is the sentiment which I oppose, that, according to the different state of a person's conscience, it has a natural tendency, either to elevate with self-righteous pride, or to depress with desponding fear. The former, if the great evil of sin be not perceived, and the conscience drowsy: the latter, if the mind be enlightened, and the conscience tender. For, as Dr. Owen has well observed, "the more spiritual any man is, the more he sees of his unspiritualness in his spiritual duties.\*

On this hypothesis there is, indeed, no such thing as On this hypothesis there is, indeed, no such thing as gospel, or glad tidings, for any of those whom the scriptures denominate, sinners—the ungodly—the lost—those who are in the way to final ruin. Because, according to the principle against which I plead, all the revealed relief by Jesus Christ, is directed to those only whose hearts are under an holy bias. But the sacred writers are far from pronouncing persons of that character, the ungodly, or the lost: and they are equally far from teaching, that creatures, possessing any degree of true sanctity, are in danger of eternal perdition. For it is absurd to suppose, that our divine sovereign will ever send holiness to hell: or that the subjects of truly pious dispositions are in the road to ruin.

truly pious dispositions are in the road to ruin.

Whereas, if we consider the inspired writings as exhibiting a full, free, and everlasting salvation, by Jesus Christ, for the chief of sinners; if we consider the testimony of God concerning his incarnate son, as a complete warrant for the most guilty and ungodly to believe in him; there is a revealed foundation of hope for the vilest of men, even when they have the strongest for the vilest of men, even when they have the strongest conviction of that being their proper character. The word of grace, respecting the perfect work of Christ, being viewed in this light, is deservedly, and by way of singular eminence, called, THE GLAD TIDINGS. For, be the wants of a sinner ever so many, and his unworthiness ever so great, the all-sufficient Jesus is presented to view, as encouraging his immediate dependence, and as rejecting none that apply to him. Agreeably to which Mr. Hervey says; "nothing is requisite,

<sup>\*</sup>On the cxxx Psalm p. 345.

in order to a participation of Christ and his benefits, but a grant from God."\* It is not under the notion, of being elected to everlasting life; of possessing any virtuous disposition; of being, by good habits or qualities, distinguished from other men; of being well humbled for sin; or of being deeply awakened in conscience, that sinners must first believe in Jesus. No: but as transgressors; as in a perishing state; and as having nothing to preserve them from despair, except what the scripture says concerning Christ, his offices, and his grace. It is, at least, in this view of the gospel, and of Jesus as revealed by it, that the writer of these pages either enjoys peace, or expects felicity.

## CHAPTER III.

## OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

Against the sentiment for which I plead, and in opposition to the course of my reasoning, it has been strenuously urged; "repentance includes an holy disposition, and must precede faith in Christ." But, supposing the priority of repentance to faith were granted, it would infer no valid objection to the principle here defended: except it were proved, that repentance must precede, as constituting an essential part of the sinner's warrant to believe in Jesus. That, however, is not likely to be soon evinced.

In what light, then, is true repentance to be considered? As a change of mind, or after-thought? This, indeed, seems to be the literal import of the original word μετανοια: and that, we acknowledge, precedes faith in Jesus Christ. For while a sinner is either stupidly inattentive to his immortal interests, or expecting justification by his own obedience, he will not come to

<sup>\*</sup> Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. p. 374. Note Edit. 5th.

Christ. As a conviction of sin, attended with apprehensions of eternal ruin? This also, it is readily granted, precedes faith in Christ. For, whoever believes in Jesus, regards him as the only saviour from divine wrath; respecting the danger of which, a conviction of sin must precede. Nay, we are led, by the language of scripture, to consider believing in Christ, as no other than fleeing to the hope set before us, that we may escape the wrath to come.\* That conviction of sin and sense of danger, should not be considered, however, as inducing God to give, but as inclining us to receive: not as exciting the father of mercies to forgive our offences, or the compassionate Jesus to justify our persons; but as impelling us to accept the provision which sovereign grace has made for the entirely destitute. Besides, neither that change of mind, nor this apprehension of danger, can be justly considered as an holy disposition: because they respect the state of the intellect, and of the conscience; not that of the heart. Or, if the heart be affected, it is no otherwise than as a new turn is given to the operation of self-love: which, simply and absolutely considered, has no holiness in it.

Must repentance, then, be viewed under the notion of sorrow for sin, and aversion to it, considered as an opposition to divine authority, and as a contrariety to divine purity? This, indeed, is that repentance which is connected with pardon and salvation. But then it may be justly queried, whether it was ever found in any sinner before he believed in Jesus Christ: as the following considerations, perhaps, may show.

Repentance, under this notion of it, is manifestly a fruit of sincere esteem for the dominion of God, and of love to his infinite excellence. Because no one can be cordially grieved for opposing a government, which he does not esteem; nor for his past aversion to excellence, which he does not admire. But the scriptures will not permit our concluding, that these pious affec-

<sup>.</sup> Heb. vi 18. Matt. iii 7

tions are possessed by sinners, before they receive the truth, and believe in Christ. If we really love and revere God, it is because he first loved us; because there is forgiveness with him; because that love, as expressed in the gift of this own son, and that forgiveness, through the atonement, have been more or less revealed to us, in the glad tidings of reconciliation. All men, when their consciences are alarmed, being pained with apprehensions of eternal destruction, will sorrow for the consequences of sin; but none besides believers in Jesus mourn over and abhor its intrinsic evil.

Genuine sorrow for sin, and self-abasement before God, are closely connected, in ancient prophecy, with faith in the bleeding Immanuel, and with reconciliation to our offended sovereign; rather, they are considered as effects of that faith and reconciliation. For thus it is written; I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, WHEN I AM PACIFIED TOWARD THEE for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God-I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in BITTERNESS for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born. To which may be added the following words: I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely, AFTER that I was turned, I repented; and AFTER that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."\*

Here we have genuine sorrow for sin, considered as \*Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. Zech. xii 10. Jer, xxxi 18, 19.

rebellion against Jehovah's government, and as abhorrent from his purity. Here we behold a remembrance of past offences paining the conscience, and shame suffusing the cheeks; confusion producing silence and grief almost breaking the heart. Whence is it, then, that inveterate rebels are thus affected, and adamantine hearts thus melted? Not from denunciations of divine vengeance; nor from apprehensions of endless perdition: but from knowing, as taught by the spirit of grace, the import of that sublime name, Jehovah;\* from looking to the pierced Messiah; and from God being reconciled to them. Yes, not only mercy revealed to the guilty, but faith in the divine testimony, a believing regard to the dying Jesus, and conversion to God, are

presented to view as producing repentance.

That the manifestation of divine benignity toward our apostate species, is friendly to holy sorrow; and that the exercise of human compassion toward disaffected neighbors, has a natural tendency to produce reformation, we are taught by the following remarkable words. The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance—If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.† Are the exercise of divine kindness, in the course of common providence, and the puny efforts of human compassion, for the relief of distressed fellow creatures, adapted to produce repentance and reformation in their different objects? then, surely, we may conclude, that the boundless benignity of God, revealed in the gospel of our salvation, must be incomparably better fitted, to excite an abhorrence of sin, conciliate the affections to God, and produce a series of holy obedience.

Further:—True repentance is the gift of Christ, considered as the ascended sovereign and saviour of his church. As it is written, Him hath God exalted, with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give

<sup>\*</sup> Exod. xxxiv 5-7. Isa. xlv 21.

repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.\* Repentance and pardon, being here so intimately connected, and both of them represented as the gifts of Jesus Christ; we are led to conclude, that real repentance for sin, and faith in the blood of Christ, coexist; that godly sorrow supposes and includes faith in revealed mercy; and that both of them are the fruit of sovereign grace.

sorrow supposes and includes faith in revealed mercy; and that both of them are the fruit of sovereign grace.

Dr. Owen, when speaking of humiliation for sin, expresses himself as follows. "There is a respect in it to the love of God: and this breaks the heart of the poor returning sinner. Sorrow from the law, shuts itself up in the soul, and strangleth it. Sorrow from the love of God opens and causeth it to flow forth. Thoughts of sinning against the love of God, managed by the Holy Ghost, what shall I say? their effects in the heart are not to be expressed—true humility consists more in believing, than in being sensible of sin—let there be no mistake: there can be no evangelical sense of sin, and humiliation for it, where there is not union with Christ. Zech. xii. 10—it is the soul's application to God for forgiveness, and not its sense of sin, that gives unto God the glory of his grace. No repentance is acceptable with God, but what is built, or leans, on the faith of forgiveness. God expressly declares in the scripture, that the forgiveness that is with him, is the foundation of his prescribing repentance unto man. One instance may suffice, Isa. lv. 7. Legal repentance, which precedes gospel faith, and is without it, is neither a disposition, preparation, nor condition of our justification."\*

Thus Mr. James Hervey: "Repent ye and believe the gospel. This may be the meaning of the exhortation. Repent; relinquish all your wrong notions, relating to the way and manner of finding acceptance with the deity. Believe the gospel; which opens a most unexpected avnuue, for the communication of this blessing.

<sup>\*</sup> Acts v 31.

t On cxxx Ps. pp. 54, 63, 64, 137. 140. Doctrine of Justification, Chap. I.

Which brings you glad tidings of a salvation, fully procured by the incarnate God, and freely offered to the unworthy sinner. The word, you know, is μεταννοειτε: which, in its primary signification, denotes not so much a reformation of conduct, as a change of sentiment. Suppose it to signify a reformation of conduct; the meaning then may be as follows. Repent; forsake all your vices, and all your follies; mortify every evil temper, and renounce every evil way. In order to render this practicable, believe the gospel; wherein a Saviour is preached and displayed. Who makes peace for such offenders: reconciles them to wherein a Saviour is preached and displayed. Who makes peace for such offenders; reconciles them to God; and obtains eternal redemption for them. This will sweetly withdraw your affections from iniquity, and sweetly attach them to the blessed God. Whereas, without this powerful expedient, you will never be delivered from the pleasing witchcraft of your lusts. Sin will always have the dominion over you, so long as you are under the law, and not under grace. Repentance, thus understood, is not the condition of obtaining salvation, but the fruit of salvation itself—I came, not to call the rightons but sinners to repentance. Many vation, but the fruit of salvation itself—I came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Many persons, I am apt to suspect, mistake the meaning of this sweet passage; and turn the freely flowing benefits of the gospel, into the rigorous requirements of the law. They reckon, our Lord's calling to repentance, is like a schoolmaster calling the youths to their task; or like a householder calling his servants to their work. Whereas it is like Joseph, the governor of Egypt, calling his brethren, each to receive a suit of apparel, and all to partake of his hospitable banquet. Christ, as a Saviour, is the greatest of benefactors. When, therefore he calls to repentance, his intention is not to defore, he calls to repentance, his intention is, not to demand, but to bestow; not to enjoin, but to impart. He is exalted, says the apostle, to give repentance.\*

Thus Mr. Thomas Boston; "the subject of true

<sup>\*</sup> Eleven Letters to Mr. J. Wesley, pp. 114, 115. Theron and Aspasio, Vol. 11I, pp. 330, 331. Note, Edit. 5th.

repentance is a convinced, believing, soul. An unconvinced sinner cannot be a true penitent; for what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. Neither can an unbelieving sinner be so; for without faith the heart may be rent for sin, but not from it—faith is the spring and source of repentance: so that though the graces of faith and repentance are given together and at once, in respect of time; yet, in the order of nature, faith goes before repentance, and the acting of faith goes before the exercise of repentance: and he that would repent, must first believe in Christ, that he may repent. Then, it is not gospel doctrine, that Christ will receive none but true penitents; or that none but such have a warrant to embrace Christ, by faith. For sensible sinners to think that they dare not, and ought not, to believe and embrace Christ, till they be more deeply humbled, and do more thoroughly repent of their sins and, in a word, be more fit to receive him; is but a gilded deceit, and a trick of the false heart. The more faith, the more repentance; as, the fuller the spring is, the streams run with the more vigorous current."\*

It is objected, "though it be not necessary for a

It is objected, "though it be not necessary for a sinner to know that he is born again, before he believe in Jesus Christ; yet regeneration itself must precede faith. For the heart of a sinner being naturally in a state of enmity to the divine character, he will never turn to God, while in that situation, for pardon and acceptance." In answer to which, the following par-

ticulars are proposed for consideration.

Before this objection can be justly considered as valid, it must be evinced, not only, that regeneration precedes faith; but also that it is necessary to authorise a sinner's reliance on Jesus Christ: than which, few sentiments

are more foreign from the genuine gospel.

Regeneration must precede faith. This, though assumed as a certain fact, may be justly doubted: for the page of inspiration does not warrant our supposing, that any one is born of God, before he believes in Jesus

<sup>\*</sup> Works, pp. 608-610. Edinb. 1767.

Christ; or, that regeneration is effected by the Holy Spirit, without the word of grace. For we are taught, by the sacred writers, to consider the word of truth, with regard to adults, as the mean of regeneration, and of many other happy effects. They teach, for instance, that it is the instrument of enlightening the mind, of awakening the conscience, and of softening the heart. "The entrance of thy word giveth light. The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces."\* That it is the instrument, or seed, of regeneration. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel-of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." That they only, who believe in Christ, are the children of God. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus-whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." That it is the mean, in the hand of the spirit, of conversion, of sanctification, and of salvation. Of conversion: "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Of SANCTIFICATION: "he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit. Sanctify

<sup>\*</sup>Ps. cxix 130. Heb. iv. 12. Jer. xxiii. 29. †John v. 25. (Vide Lampium in loc.) John vi. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 15. James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 23.

<sup>#</sup> John i 12. Gal. iii. 26. 1 John v 1.

them through thy truth: thy word is truth—that they also might be sanctified through the truth-thanks be to God, that whereas you were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed, from the heart, the model of doctrine into which ye were delivered. The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth—ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit." Of SALVATION: "the gospel of Christ-is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that belie eth—the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."\*

We are further taught, that the primitive christians loved one another for the sake of evangelical truth. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever-the elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth." That they considered one another as happy, and rejoiced in that happiness, in proportion as they lived under the influence of divine truth. "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth-I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth-I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth-Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself."+

Once more: - The apostles frequently describe merely nominal Christians, and ungodly persons in general, by their not knowing, not loving, or not possessing, the truth. "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved—that they all might be damned who believed not the truth—men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth—if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the

<sup>\*</sup>Psalm xix 7. 2 Thess, ii 14. Matt. xiii. 23. Jo! n xv i 17, 19. Rom vi 17. (See Doddridge on the place.) Eph. iv 21. [715 ali 4.5] 1 Pet. i 22. Rom. i 16. James i 17. + 2 John i 8, 10. ii 4.

truth—ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth—if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us—if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us—he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."\*

Such is the language of inspiration, relative to the high importance of revealed truth, in the great plan of salvation by Jesus Christ! Hence it appears, that few things are more evidently contained, or more strongly asserted in scripture, than the instrumentality of divine truth in the regeneration of sinners. It is there described as the honored mean, as the seed of God, + by which the Holy Spirit effects the regeneration, the sanctification, and the consolation of those that are, saved. But it is impossible for us to conceive of the mind being enligtened, of the conscience being relieved, of the will being regulated, and of the affections being purified, by the word of truth, any further than it is believed. I conclude, therefore, that regeneration is not, in order of time, previous to faith in Christ. Consequently, as they are the ungodly whom the spirit regenerates by the truth, so persons of that character are warranted to believe in Jesus.

It is not requisite for a sinner to know that he is born again, before he believe in Jesus Christ. But, if it be a fact, that regeneration itself is previously necessary to faith in Christ; whoever is persuaded of that fact, and ardently concerned about his eternal happiness, cannot forbear to investigate the state of his own soul, respecting regeneration, with much the same solicitude as if he considered being born again, under the notion of his warrant to rely on Jesus Christ: and thus his conscience must unavoidably be embarrassed, respecting his permission to believe, until he become

<sup>\* 2</sup> Thess. ii 10 12. 1 Tim. vi 5. 2 Tim. ii 25. iii 7. 1 John i 8, 10 ii 4. † 1 Pet. i 23, 24, 25. 1 John iii. 9.

persuaded of his regeneration. Nay, on supposition that the heart must be renewed, previous to believing the gospel, and to any degree of dependence upon the atonement; it seems as if sinners ought always to inquire into the state of their own hearts, and to have evidence of their being renewed by divine influence, before they can, without presumption, expect the least benefit from Jesus Christ. I said, without presumption, For, according to the sentiment here opposed, it would be presumption—it would argue a criminal forwardness, in any one to rely on Christ for acceptance with God, before he perceived the marks of regeneration attending his tempers and conduct.—It is readily granted, that the hearts of sinners are, by nature, strongly disaffected to the divine character; and that while under the power of this enmity, they are far from God. But the energy of the spirit applying the word of reconciliation to their hearts, the truth is believed, and their enmity subdued, in the same instant. According to that saying, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free—free, from guilt on your consciences, and from reigning enmity in your hearts.

Still further to prove and illustrate the instrumentality of divine truth, in the regeneration and sanctification of sinners, the following custotions are portional.

Still further to prove and illustrate the instrumentality of divine truth, in the regeneration and sanctification of sinners, the following quotations are pertinent. Thus Mr. Charrock:—"we are new-created by the spirit of God infusing faith into us. Faith is of absolute necessity to regeneration. The gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth. The scripture doth distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause, by the prepositions ex, or ex, and dia. When we are said to be born of the spirit, it is (John iii. 5.) ex anexumatos (1 John iii. 9.) ex @sov; (1 John v. 1.) never dia anexumatos, or dia @sov: but we are no where said to be born of the word, or begotten of the word; but dia rogov, by, or with, the word, (1 Pet i. 23.) and dia evayystion, (1 Cor. iv. 15.) I have begotten you

through the gospel. The preposition ex, or ex, usually denotes the efficient, or material cause; dia, the instrument, or means, by which a thing is wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil; grace enters into the heart by the word of God. That entered by a word of error; this by a word of truth. Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you: (John xv. 3.) whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him; for it was the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness therefore which it begets, is called the holiness of truth: (Eph. iv. 24.) opposed to the επιθυμιαις της απατης, lusts of deceit, verse the twenty-second. Lusts grow up from error and deceit; and holiness of the new man grows up from truth. If the spirit quicken, [or excite spiritual diligence,] it is by some gospel precept; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word: whatsoever working there is in a Christian's heart, it is by some word dropping upon it. The spirit makes the word, not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow: it is first life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word the begets us. and through the word he quickens us: thy word hath quickened me. It is by the word, God gathers a church in the world; by the same word, he sanctifies it to greater degrees. (Eph. v. 26.) It is the seed whereby we are born; the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Pet. ii. 2."\*

Thus Dr. Owen:—"this [regeneration] is wrought by the word 1 Pet. i. 23. We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. Wherein, not only the thing itself, of our regeneration by the word, but the manner of it also, is declared. It is by the collation of a new spiritual life

<sup>\*</sup> Works, Vol. II pp. 43, 509, 155, 158. Edit. 2d,

upon us, whereof the word is the seed. As every life proceeds from some seed, that hath in itself virtually the whole life to be educed from it, by natural ways and means; so the word in the hearts of men, is turned into a vital principle, that, cherished by suitable means, puts forth vital acts and operations. By this means we puts forth vital acts and operations. By this means we are born of God, and quickened, who by nature, are children of wrath; dead in trespasses and sins. So Paul tells the Corinthians, that he had begotten them, in Jesus Christ, by the gospel. It is the instrument of God for this end; and mighty and powerful, through God, it is for the accomplishment of it."\*

The same excellent author, when speaking of sanctification by the truth, says:—" there is a great answerableness and correspondency, between the heart of a believer, and the truth that he doth believe. As the word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart: yea, they are the same thing variously expressed. (Rom. vi. 17.) You have obeyed from the heart, ειςονπαρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης, the form of doctrine delivered unto you. As our translation doth not, so I know not how, in so few words, to express that which is emphatically here insinuated by the Holy Ghost. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel begets the form, figure, image, or likeness of itself, in the hearts of them that believe. So they are cast into the mould of it. As is the one, so is the other. The principle of grace in the heart, and that in the word, are as children of the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a living word, and the word is figured, limned grace. As is regeneration, so is a regenerate heart: as is the doctrine of faith, so is a believer. And this gives great evidence unto, and assurance of the things believed. First, the *truth is in Jesus*: then it is expressed in the word. This word, learned and believed, becomes grace in the heart, every way answering unto the Lord Christ his image, from whom this transform-

<sup>\*</sup> On Heb. ii 2, 3, 4. p 178.

ing truth did thus proceed. Nay, this is carried by the apostle yet higher, namely, unto God the father himself, whose image Christ is, and believers his, through the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 6. Regeneration doth not, in order of time, precede the soul's interest in the forgiveness that is with God, or its being made partaker of the pardon of sin. I say no more but that it doth not precede it in order of time; not determining which hath precedency in order of nature. That, I confess, which the method of the gospel leads unto, is, that absolution, acquitment, or the pardon of sin, is the foundation of the communication of all saving grace unto the soul, and so precedeth all grace in the sinner whatever. It is hence evident, that an assurance of being regenerate is no way previously necessary unto the believing of an interest in forgiveness; so that although a man have not the former, it is, or may be, his duty to endeavor the latter. When convinced persons cried out, what shall we do to be saved? the answer was, believe, and you shall be so. Believe in Christ, and in the remission of sin by his blood, is the first thing that convinced sinners are called unto. They are not directed first to secure their souls that they are born again, and then afterward to believe. But they are first to believe, that the remission of sin is tendered to them in the blood of Christ; and that by him they may be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law. Nor, upon this proposition, is it the duty of men to question whether they have faith, or no, but actually to believe: and faith, in its operation, will evidence itself. See Acts xiii. 38, 39."\*

Again, he says: "the whole matter of sanctification and holiness is peculiarly joined with, and limited unto, the doctrine, truth, and grace of the gospel: for holiness is nothing, but the implanting, writing, and realising the gospel in our souls. Hence it is termed octions the annual second Eph. iv. 24.) The holiness of truth;

<sup>+</sup> On the hundred and thirtieth Psalm, pp. 160, 161, 339, 340.

which the truth of the gospel ingenerates, and which consists in a conformity thereunto: and the gospel itself is αληθεία η κατ' ευσεβείαν, (Tit. i. 1.) The truth which is according to godliness; which declares that godliness and holiness which God requireth. The prayer also of our Saviour, for our sanctification, is conformed thereunto. (John xvii. 17.) Sanctify them in (or by) thy truth; thy word is truth: and he sanctified himself for us, to be a sacrifice, that we might be sanctified in the truth. This alone is that truth which makes us free; (John viii. 12.) that is, from sin and the law, unto righteousness in holiness. It belongs neither to nature, nor the law, so as to proceed from them, or to be effected by them. There neither is, nor ever was in the world, nor ever shall be, the least dram of holiness, but what, flowing from Jesus Christ, is communicated by the spirit, according to the truth and promise of the gospel. There may be something like it, as to its outward acts and effects, (at least, some of them;) something that may wear its livery in the world, that is but the fruit of men's own endeavors, in compliance with their convictions; but holiness it is not, nor of the same kind or nature with it."\*

Respecting the word of truth as the instrument of regeneration, it has, to the following purpose, been objected:—"they who consider divine truth as the mean of regeneration must grant, that it is by the Holy Spirit the word is introduced into the mind, in order to its having such an effect—that some operation of the spirit on the understanding takes place, in order so to change it, as to receive the word. And, that this operation precedes the entrance of light into the mind. Consequently, that the change by which the mind is prepared to receive the light, is not effected by means of the word: and yet, in that very change men are born of the spirit."†

<sup>\*</sup> Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, B. IV. Chap. i. § 8. See Mr. T. Scott's Essays on the most important subjects in Religion, p 21. † Mr. S. Hopkin's two discourses, pp. 112, 113.

According to this view of the subject, the word of truth, having no influence, is of no use, in the work of regeneration; the salutary and important change being produced entirely without it. Either, therefore, by those expressions, born again, the objector must intend something very different from what is meant by them in scripture; or he is not far from contradicting the express determination of inspired writers: as appears by various passages already adduced. To imagine that a preparation of the mind, merely to receive the truth, is a change so great as to answer those emphatical expressions, regeneration, born again, born of the spirit, born of God, and a new heart; is, I think, very unwarrantable. Because, on that supposition, the change denoted by being born of the spirit, takes place merely in the intellect, or thinking faculty; not at all in the will, or the heart. But, whatever light any person may have in his mind, the scriptures never teach us to consider him as born of the spirit, except his heart be renewed, so as to love God and approve of his ways. Nay, the author himself confirms my assertion, by elsewhere saying; "this regeneration of which I am speaking consists in a change of the will or heart—I have good grounds to assert, that in regeneration the will, or heart is the immediate subject of the divine operation, and so of the moral change that is effected thereby."\* Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing. The glorious God, however, is not leved by appearance are surpressed as a revealed is not loved by apostate creatures, unless as revealed

is not loved by apostate creatures, unless as revealed in Jesus Christ, and by the gospel.

It is too hastily assumed, that the mind is preparedo receive the light of spiritual knowledge, previous to the truth having any influence upon it. For, may not the Holy Spirit, without any antecedent operation, apply divine truth, or the sense and meaning of the word; so as to enlighten the understanding, impress the conscience, and effect the heart? May not that omnipotent agent, without any previous preparation, attend

his own word with such energy, as to irradiate the mind, subdue the will, and give a new turn to the whole soul? Nay, do not the scriptural passages already produced, naturally lead us to conclude, that this, with regard to regeneration, is a fact? If there be not an aptitude in the word of truth, as an instrument in the hand of God, to produce this great moral change, why is that word compared to light, called a two-edged sword, and represented as giving life? When the apostle says, I had not known sin but By the law; and, the law sports the wrath are does be not intend to inform us, that worketh wrath; \* does he not intend to inform us, that the divine precepts, and their awful sanction, are means by which the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, and alarms the conscience? So, when David says, thy word hath quickened me; and when our Lord prays, sanctify them through thy truth; † must we not consider them as teaching, that the word of grace is the mean of producing comfort, and of promoting holiness? When Paul speaks of life and immortality being brought to light by  $(\delta\iota\omega)$  the gospel; and of Gentiles being made partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel; † does he not intend to represent the doctrine of redemption he not intend to represent the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ, as the great mean by which that light, and this promise, came to be enjoyed by us? Why, then, should we affix a different sense to similar language, respecting the work of regeneration, in the texts before adduced, from the writings of Paul, of James, and of Peter? Why, when the word of truth, or the gospel of divine grace, is represented as that by which sinners are born again—as the very seed of regeneration—should the words receive a qualified interpretation, so as to mean something, which the author to whom I advert does not consider as regeneration, properly so called? To be of the truth; to be of faith; and to be OF God: are various forms of expression, to exhibit

§ John xviii 37. 1 John iii 19. Gal. iii 9. John viii 47. 1 John iii 10. iv 3, 6, v. 19. 3 John 11.

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. vii 7. iv 15. † Psalm cxix 50. John xvii 17, 19. ‡2 Tim. 10. Eph. iii 6.

the same spiritual character in different points of light. Is any one represented as of God? he is to be viewed as born of the spirit. Is he said to be of faith? we must regard him as believing in Jesus. Is he described as of the truth? we must consider him as having received the gospel, and as living under its influence. But, according to the objection under our notice, a person may be of God, yet neither be of faith nor of the truth.

Besides, for an awakened sinner to be persuaded, that regeneration is prior to faith in Jesus, and that it is effected without the instrumentality of divine truth; is adapted to give an injurious direction to his prayers and his expectations, respecting that affair. The former: because if he pray agreeably to that idea, it will be for something under the notion of regeneration, in which the knowledge of Christ, and a regard to his atonement, have no concern. Consequently, for something which leaves him at a distance from wisdom, and from happiness. The latter: because neglecting the testimony of God concerning Jesus, he will be ready to look for some secret, and enthusiastical impulse, to produce the important change. Two evils, these, of no small consequence, in whomsoever they are found. Once more:—This author himself, I think, must admit

Once more:—This author himself, I think, must admit that satan laid the foundation of his kingdom among men, by the use of language replete with infernal falsehood. But, if so, it cannot be absurd to maintain, that the spiritual dominion of Christ, in the hearts of sinners, commences under the salutary operation of divine truth. If the father of lies, by words of deceit, without any previous physical influence on the mental powers, polluted the imagination, obscured the understanding, and corrupted the heart of Eve, when in her primitive state, and under a strong bias to obedience; which, I presume, this writer will acknowledge: why should he deny, that the Holy Spirit, by the word of truth, without any preparatory agency on the soul, enlightens the

mind, impresses the conscience, and gives a new turn to the heart of one that is dead in sin?

That our first parents, in their innocent state, were under a powerful predilection for whatever was morally right, must be allowed; except we deny their being created in a state of complete rectitude: and that no divine agency upon their minds, or their will, was employed to produce a compliance with satan's temptation, must be granted; unless the Most Holy be impiously considered as the author of sin. The propensities of their nature, therefore, in favor of communion with God, and of obedience to him, we may justly conclude, were not less powerful than those in the hearts of their degenerate offspring, are to objects quite the reverse. Consequently, as the first inclination to evil, in the human heart, when perfectly pure was produced, without any previous physical influence, by the lie of satan; we are led, by analogy, equally as by the language of scripture, to consider the first holy tendency, in a heart that is totally corrupt, as produced by the truth of God,

without any preparatory agency.

This argument from analogy is the more observable, as it arises from the only fact of the kind, that ever did, or ever will take place among men. It may be rendered more conclusive, however, by remarking, that though the scriptures teach us to consider depravity as first produced in the holy hearts of our paradisical progenitors, merely by the operation of satan's falsehood; yet the same infallible writings lead us to conclude, that evangelical truth is only the mean of renewing depraved hearts, or of turning them to God. Were it demonstrated, therefore, that the vigor of holy tendencies, in the pure nature of our original parents, was much less than that of depravity, in the hearts of their posterity; we might, nevertheless, adopt a principal of reasoning, repeatedly employed in the writings of Paul, and say: if the language of deceit, from the lying lips of satan, without any previous influence, was capable of corrupting an holy heart, and of pro-

ducing actual disobedience; much more\* is divine truth, in the hand of the sacred spirit, able to renew depraved

hearts, and to produce a course of obedience.

The author to whom I refer, still further objects;—
"there must be knowledge and approbation of the divine character and law, and a sight and sense of the ill desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in him. It is certain to a demonstration, that they who are not heartily reconciled to God and his law; and do not hate sin, or abhor themselves for it, do not know, and are not reconciled to the grace of God through Christ: nor can they attain to the latter, if not first brought to the former; but will remain eternally enemies to both."† Here we have, if I mistake not, various unguarded assertions, which corrupt the gospel, and have a pernicious tendency.

There must be knowledge of the divine character, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator. But whence is that knowledge of the divine character to be derived? From the glad tidings of salvation? That is contrary to the principle on which this author manifestly here proceeds. For, according to his theology, the divine character must be known and approved, before the gospel be either known or understood—before we have the least spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, or any dependence on his atoning death, for pardon and peace. This, however, is apparently contrary to the following divine declarations. No man knoweth the son, but the father; neither knoweth any man the father, save the son, and he to whom the son WILL REVEAL HIM. The only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the father, HE HATH DECLARED HIM-to give the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of jesus christ. We all, in an unveiled face, the beholding as in a glass the GLORY OF THE LORD, are changed into the same image. \ These

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. v 9, 10, 15, 17. Heb. ix 13, 14. † Mr. Hopkin's Two discourses, pp. 24, 25. Note.

<sup>‡</sup> αναχεχαλυμμενω προσωπω.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xi 27. John i 18. 2 Cor. iv 6. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

infallible sayings plainly denote, that the divine character neither is, nor can be known by us, except as revealed in the person and work of our great Mediator. But, were the position on which I animadvert founded in fact, we should have little occasion for the glad tidings of salvation, and the death of Jesus, in order to learn the true character of God.

Whence, then, if not from the doctrine of redemption, is the knowledge under consideration to be derived? Not, surely, from the works of creation, and of common providence. For then, with the ancient heathens, we must seek the Lord, if haply we may feel after him, like men groping in darkness, that we may find him.\* Or, must sinners, by studying the absolute purity, the extensive demands, and the tremendous curse of Jehovah's law, become acquainted with the divine character? This, indeed, seems to be our author's meaning: and it is readily granted, that the true nature of the law being well understood, furnishes, in certain respects, a knowledge of the divine character. For, by that system of moral duty, and its penal sanction, we are informed of the absolute dominion, the flaming purity, and the punishing justice of God. These, however, constitute only a part of his character: and we must either know more of his peerless excellence, and supreme perfection, than the law reveals, or have neither confidence in him, nor peace of conscience-neither hope, nor holiness.

The character of God which must be known, in order to our present sanctification and future happiness, reveals much more of his eternal excellence than is displayed in the moral precepts, and in their awful sanction. For they who are not acquainted with this character, except so far as the violated law has taught them; have no more knowledge of it than Adam had, immediately after his first offence, and before divine mercy was revealed. Our original father, at that un-

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xvii 27.

happy moment, knew enough of his maker's character to fill him with terror, and to drive him from the divine presence; but nothing at all that excited esteem or veneration, confidence or love; nor yet repentance, or genuine sorrow for sin, and self-abasement before his affronted sovereign. For we find that he, and his partner in disobedience, were thoroughly disposed, had it been in their power, to have exculpated themselves, by charging the blame upon others. The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree. The serpent beguiled me—were their pleas; without any confession of guilt, or any petition for pardon. Having no knowledge of the divine character, besides that which suited the law of their creation, and their state of innocence, they could have no hope, till mercy was revealed: and, among sinners, where there is no hope, there is no holiness—no abhorrence of sin, as to its intrinsic evil; nor any genuine self-abasement before God. "For, a sense of religion, without hope, is a state of phrenzy and distraction; void of all inducements to love and obedience."\*

It is in virtue of evangelical truth, of gracious promises, and of hope, that the hearts of sinners are sanctified. For thus it is written; ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit—whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature—having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God—we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.† Does the most holy bestow any measure of sanctifying influence on deprayed creatures? it is because there is forgiveness with him, and as the God of peace. For thus the apostle prays; the very God of peace, or the

<sup>\*</sup> Bp. Sherlock's use and intent of prophecy, p. 69. London, 1726. † 1 Peter i 22. 2 Pet. i iv. 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 John iii 2, 3.

God of peace himself, sanctify you wholly.\* But, under that amiable character, he does not appear, except as in Christ, and as reconciling the world unto himself.† We may safely conclude, therefore, that he whose knowledge of the divine character is derived merely from the law, knows little more of the glorious God than may be learned from what is denominated, Natural Religion; and is far from having, either that profound respect for him, of which this author speaks, or any degree of confidence in him. We are assured, however, that confidence in God is connected with a knowledge of his character. For thus it is written; They that know thy name will put their trust

in thee. ±

In what manner, then, is the character of God represented by the pen of infallibility, so as to exhibit encouragement for sinners to trust in him? Thus THE ETERNAL proclaims his most sublime name, and explains its comprehensive import: Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH, GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. Here the Most High appears, as it were, in person, professedly to publish the import of his own most glorious name; that name, for the sake of which he pardons offences, and performs his promises; that name, for the honor of which he dispenses the richest blessings on his chosen people, and inflicts the most awful punishment on his hardened enemies. || Again, the King Eternal says, There is no God else besides me; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR; there is none besides me. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. I Now, in these

<sup>† 2</sup> Cor. v 19. • 1 Thess. v 23. ‡ Psalm ix 10.

Joshua vii 9. Ezek. xx 9. ¶ Isaiah xlv 21. 22.

ancient oracle, which expressly declare the divine character, that character appears to be as rich with sovereign grace, as it is bright with eternal holiness; and as alluring with pardoning mercy, as it is tremendous with punishing justice. But where, except in the cross of Christ, are the grace and holiness, the mercy and justice of God, united and realized, according to the venerable import of these characters? Or how, except by the doctrine of redemption, shall we behold the cross of Christ, as exhibiting the divine character? Such, however, is that name, by which the Great Invisible will be known by all his people: under which name, he will be trusted and loved, adored and obeyed.

The following declarations also, enter deeply into the divine character, as revealed to the ancient Jewish church. Thou art a God of pardons; gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared: and it is with a direct view to the divine character as thus described, that the people of God are heard, in a transport of joy, to exclaim; who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.\* Thus is the infinite God characterised in the old testament: nor can we suppose that his essential goodness, and pardoning mercy, are less conspicuous in the new. No: there he is characterised, the father of mercies—the God of all grace—the God of love—the God of hope—and the God of peace.† Nay, the disciple whom Jesus loved, gives the divine character in two single words. To denote the glory of supreme holiness, he says, God is LIGHT: and, most emphatically to express the infinitude of divine goodness, he says, once and again, God is LOVE. The each of these delightful and

<sup>\*</sup> Nehem. ix 17. [Margin.] Psalm cxxx 4. Micah vii 18. † 2 Cor. i 3. Rom. xvi 20. Heb. xiii 20. 1 Pet. v 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 11 Rom xv 13. ‡ 1 John i 5. iv 8, 16.

comprehensive sayings, the apostle has a direct regard to those discoveries which the Eternal has made of himself in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. God is LIGHT: God is LOVE. These two ideas united, constitute a character supremely beautiful, and supremely venerable—a character, which encourages confidence, excites hope, and commands reverence. This character expresses, in the most sublime and concise manner, the import of those ancient oracles already produced, from the writings of Moses, and of Isaiah. They that know God, as thus revealed, will put their trust in him.

Sinners must approve the divine character-must be heartily reconciled to God and his law; before they can be reconciled to the grace of God through Christ. if they be so reconciled, previous to believing in Jesus, and to a view of revealed mercy, it should seem as if they had not much occasion for either faith, or grace, or Christ. Because it must be admitted, that persons of such piety are already accepted of God, bear his image, and are in the way to heaven. A small degree of assistance from Christ, and from grace, may be necessary, perhaps, to expedite their progress in the heavenly road; on which, without regarding sovereign mercy and atoning blood, they have so happily entered; and to render them a little more comfortable under the afflictions with which they meet. But, certainly, as they already approve the divine character, and have made such advances in sanctification; they cannot believe in Christ as justifying the ungodly, nor consider themselves as entirely unworthy. Because, on a comparison with unregenerate persons, who have always constituted a vast majority of mankind, their moral worth is very great. For they who approve the divine character, and are heartily reconciled to God and his law, must be viewed by all the world, as the cordial friends, and the willing servants of God. On the principles of this author, therefore, we may safely assert, that their hearts are holy, their character honorable,

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and their state secure, without any dependence on sovereign grace, and without believing in the great Mediator: so that they are actually in the way to heaven, without regarding either grace, or Christ. Eternal election does not more firmly ascertain the future holiness of its objects, than being "heartily reconciled to God in his law," secures the everlasting felicity of all those to whom that character belongs. Because, being so reconciled, they are in possession of that holiness, without which, no one shall see the Lord: and, consequently, in a state of preparation for the heavenly world. There is not, there cannot be any more danger of God abandoning those to everlasting perdition, who are become his cordial friends; than there is of his reversing the decree of election. Are multitudes of our species under a divine curse? it is as rebels against God, as habitually disapproving of his character, and as disaffected to his law. Are numbers consigned over to final ruin? it is as enemies to God, as hating his character, and as averse to his government. For, as a certain writer says, "nothing that loves God can perish."

Nor, on our author's principles, is it only in a future state, that the characters under consideration are sure of blessedness. For, previous to any reliance, either on divine grace, or on Jesus Christ; and even before they are permitted to rely on the one or the other; they must have a considerable degree of true happiness. Because it seems impossible for any reasonable creature to be really miserable, wherever he exist, while he "approves the divine character, and is heartily reconciled to God and his law." For such an one voluntarily sanctifies the name, the perfection, the government of God.\* He sincerely unites with saints on earth, and with angels in heaven, in loving and adoring the supreme. As a sincere approbation of the character and government of God, is, in every stage of our existence, essential to human happiness; and as, wherever, in the wide creation, such an holy approbation is more or less

<sup>\*</sup>Lev. x 3. Isa. viii, 13. xxix. 23. 1 Pet. iii 15.

wanting, there is a proportional degree of guilt and misery; so happiness is, by divine constitution, attached to that approbation, and must attend the person who "is heartily reconciled to God and his law." Nor is this the language of mere theory: for every believer knows by experience, that, whatever his afflictions and trials may be, he always feels himself happy, when conscious of his being "heartily reconciled to God and his law." While that is the case, he imitates our perfect pattern, and his language is not may will but thing his law." While that is the case, he imitates our perfect pattern; and his language is, not my will, but thine be done. But the supposition of any one so approving the divine character, being so reconciled to the government of God, and sanctifying the Lord God in his heart, before he believes the gracious gospel, or depends on Jesus Christ, is an opinion absolutely unfounded.

The reason of an holy disposition, or a virtuous turn of heart, being requisite, previous to faith in Jesus Christ, is thus expressed. "The necessity of the sinner's everyising virtue enterement to his justification.

ner's exercising virtue antecedent to his justification, and in order to it, is not because he needs any worthiness of his own, or can have any; but because by this alone can his heart be so united to the Mediator, as to be the proper ground of his being looked upon and treated as so far one with him, as that his merit and righteousness may be properly imputed to him, or reckoned in his favor, so as to avail for his pardon and justifica-

tion."\*

That the principle which I oppose has a natural ten-dency to feed self-righteous hope, in the heart of a formalist, and to harrass the awakened sinner with desponding fear, has been already observed. This pernicious tendency principally arises, from its corrupting the doctrine of justification before God. For, under the influence of this anti-evangelical sentiment, our author very plainly maintains, that something besides the righteousness of Christ, as revealed in the gospel, and freely imputed to him that believes, is absolutely

<sup>\*</sup> Mr. S. Hopkins' Two Discourses, pp. 32, 33. Note.

necessary to justification. That something, he tells us, is virtue, and the exercise of it—to an eminent degree; as we have seen under the last objection. This virtue he expressly pronounces necessary, antecedent, and in order to justification. But if so, the most high does not, as Paul represents him, justify the ungodly.\* No: it is the sinner as become truly virtuous, or as possessed of moral worth. In strong contradiction to himself, however, this writer says; not that the sinner "needs any worthiness of his own, or can have any." But, is nothing to be called worthiness, which does not enable a man to claim acceptance with God, as a legal debt? Or is he ashamed of the term worthiness, while he retains the thing? For what is the exercise of virtue? what is an approbation of the divine character? what is an hearty reconciliation to God and his law, but moral worthiness? Whatever our author may think or say of these things, the generality of others, I doubt not, will consider them as exceedingly amiable, as morally excellent, as worthy the greatest saint, and as highly approved by the Most Holy. While this author utterly renounces the doctrine of Roman Catholics, respecting the merit of condignity;† he seems to approve their notion of merit, with regard to congruity. That notion, however, was held in detestation by our old Protestant writers, both Lutherans and Calvinists, as inimical to the doctrine of scripture; and is deservedly exploded by the thirteenth article of the Church of England.

It is only by the exercise of this virtue, that the heart of a sinner can be so united to Christ, as to be the ground of his righteousness being imputed, for pardon and justification. The only ground, then, on which our Lord's obedience can be imputed to sinners, is,—not their having been chosen in him, before the foundation of the world; not his relation to them, under the character of a substitute; nor the vicarious nature of his per-

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. iv 5. † Two Discourses, pp. 20, 31. Note.

fect work; but, their own virtue, their excellent moral qualities, or the goodness of their own hearts in cleaving to Jesus Christ! Yes, they having the virtue to esteem Christ, God has the benignity to love them. But, as their virtue is not quite complete, he, to manifest his delight in virtue, and to supply its imperfections, grants them the benefit of our Lord's imputed righteousness. Thus our own obedience becomes a pedestal, on which the righteousness of Christ may stand exalted; and whence, having such an excellent basis, it appears to great advantage! For, according to this dogma, it is by the co-operation of human worthiness, and of divine grace, that sinners obtain both pardon and of divine grace, that sinners obtain both pardon

and justification.

Never, to the best of my recollection, did I meet with a more palpable corruption of that capital article, justification before God, by any writer who did not explode the doctrine of imputed righteousness, than that in the words to which I refer! The doctrine of our author, in this respect, is indeed too nearly akin to that of the Schoolmen, and of the Council of Trent. For thus Dr. Owen, relative to the Popish doctrine of acceptance with God. "This [first] justification, they say, is by faith; the obedience and satisfaction of Christ being the only meritorious cause thereof. Only they dispute many things about preparations for it, and dispositions unto it. Under those terms the Council of Trent included the doctrine of the Schoolmen about meritum de congruo."\* Thus, also, Mr. James Hervey, when addressing Mr. J. Wesley: "What can be meaning by, Christ shall profit you nothing, if ye be circumcised? If ye make circumcision, or any thing whatever, besides the righteousness of Christ, necessary to your accep-tance with God, ye shall receive no advantage from all that the Redeemer has done and suffered. This is to halt between works and grace, between Christ and

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of Justification, Chap. V Vide Chemnitium, Exam. Concil. Trident. p. 156.

self: and such divided regards, he will interpret as an affront, rather than an acceptable homage. Indeed, this is, in Christians, the grand apostacy. By this they deny the sufficiency of their Saviour's most consummate righteousness—and must expect no salvation, but by doing the whole law. If any one say, that man is justified only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or only by the remission of sins, without the co-operation of the same and the same acceptable with the same and the same acceptable with the same acceptable with the same acceptable with the same acceptable with the same acceptable homage. Indeed, the same acceptable with the same acceptable homage. Indeed, the same acceptable homage. Indeed, this is, in Christians, the grand apostacy. By this they have a same acceptable homage. Indeed, this is, in Christians, the grand apostacy. By this they are same acceptable homage. Indeed, this is, in Christians, the grand apostacy. By this they deny the same acceptable homage. Indeed, this is, in Christians, the same acceptable homage. Indeed, they are same acceptable homage. In a same acceptable homage. In a same RATION OF INHERENT GRACE AND HOLY LOVE, let him be accursed. Thus dogmatizes, and thus anathematizes, that Mother of falsehoods, [the Church of Rome, in the Council of Trent] Choose now your side. For my part, I renounce and abjure the proud and iniquitious decree. If you persist in your present opinion, there will be an apparent harmony between yourself and Rome, but an essential difference between yourself and Aspasio."\*

The necessity of the sinner's exercising virtue, antecedent to his justification, and in order to it; and so on. How contrary this to the language of inspiration, relative to a sinner's acceptance with God! of which the relative to a sinner's acceptance with God! of which the following passages are a specimen. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are—the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to ME A SINNER. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For every one that exalteth himself," by pleading his own virtuous exercises, "shall be abased; and he who humbleth himself," by sincerely confessing that he is absolutely unworthy, and by casting himself at the feet of sovereign mercy, "shall be exalted—I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;—for therein is the righteousness of God revealed," not from one exercise of virtue to another, but "from faith to faith. The righteousness of God without the law," which requires the exercise \*Eleven letters to Mr. J. Wesley, p 62, 256.

<sup>\*</sup> Eleven letters to Mr. J. Wesley, p 62, 256,

of virtue, is manifested—even the righteousness of God; which is," not by virtue, but "by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe—being justified," not as exercising virtue, but "FREELY by his GRACE—that he might be just, and the justifier," not of him that is virtuous, but "of him that believeth in Jesus," all sinful as he is. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works, or virtue? Nay, but by the law," or doctrine "of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified without the deeds of the law," or the evercise of virtue. "If Abraham of the law," or the exercise of virtue. "If Abraham was justified by works," or through the co-operation of his own virtuous exercises, "he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh," in the exercise of moral virtue, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not," nor is distinguished by virtuous exercises; "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," and therefore entirely destitute of all true virtue; "his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," or virtuous exercises of the heart and life: " saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin--if they which are of the law," or of moral virtue, "be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect—therefore it is," not of moral virtue, but "of faith, that it might be by grace," independent of our own virtue; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed—as many as are of the works of the law," or of moral virtue, "are under the curse-what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I

may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness," or moral virtue, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness;" were not con-cerned about moral virtue; have received\* righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;" or in the exercise of moral virtue,

and by obedience to ceremonial institutes.†

A little to illustrate the last of these passages, it may be observed; that though our translators have used the word attained, in each member of the contrast here formed; the original terms employed by the apostle are different, and must in this connection have different meanings. The Jews followed after the law of righteousness; they earnestly sought acceptance with God by their own obedience. But, notwithstanding all their exertions, they did not attain (our speace) to the law of righteousness; or to righteousness and justification by the law. Whereas the Gentiles, being enveloped in ignorance, and sunk in sensuality, followed not after righteousness; had little or no concern about acceptance with God, and righteousness for that purpose. But, though thus inattentive to their immortal interests, they have received, (κατελαβε) as a free gift, that righteousness which the gospel reveals, seven the righteousness which is by faith. To attain righteousness, denotes desire, design, exertion for that end. These, Paul informs us, the Gentiles had not: and therefore he uses a word answering to the term received. The Jews desired righteousness, aimed at righteousness, pursued righteousness, and succeeded not: the apostle, there-

<sup>\*</sup> K & T & A C &, apprehenderunt. Vulgate, Montanus, Grotius.
† Luke xviii. 11—14. Rom. i 16, 17. iii 21—28. iv 2—16. Gal. iii
10. Philip iii 8, 9. Rom. ix 30, 31, 32.
‡ Rom. v 17.
§ Rom. i. 16, 17.

fore, employs terms corresponding to the words, attained not.\*

"Nothing," says Dr. Owen, "seems to be more contrary unto reason, than what is here made manifest by the event. The Gentiles who lived in sin and pleasure, not once endeavoring to attain unto any righteousness before God, yet attained unto it upon the preaching of the gospel. Israel, on the other hand, which followed after righteousness, diligently in all the works of the law and duties of obedience unto God thereby, came short of it, attained not unto it. All preparations, all dispositions, all merits, as unto righteousness and justification, are excluded from the Gentiles. For in all of them there is, more or less, a following after righteousness; which is denied of them all. Only by faith in him who justifieth the ungodly, they attain righteousness, or they attained the righteousness of faith. For to attain righteousness by faith, and to attain the righteousness of faith, are the same thing. Wherefore, all things that are comprised any way in following after righteousness, such as are all our duties and works, are excluded from any influence into our justification. And this is expressed to declare the sovereignty and freedom of the grace of God herein; namely, that we are justified freely by his grace, and that on our part all boasting is excluded. Let men pretend what they will, and dispute what they please, those who attain unto righteousness and justification before God, when they follow not after righteousness; they do it by the gratuitous

<sup>\*</sup>Our 10 Aut. Thus Beza on the text: "Quæ non sectabantur. Ta μη διωποντα. Ubi igitur opera præparationis?—Gentes enim non modo non sectabantur legem justitiæ, sed etiam eam fugiebantatque illi be'lum indixerant." With this, his Note on 1 Tim. i 13, may be compared; where among other things, he says, "En merita præparationis quæ profert Apostolus!—Misericordia sum donatus, ηλεηθγε. Hoc non video qui possis Latine, servato ordine, passivo verbo, explicare: nam miseratus nonnisi active dicitur. Vulgata, Misericordiam Dei consecutus sum—Erasmus, misericordiam adeptus sum. Neutra interpretatio mihi satis placuit. Dicimur enim ea consequi et adispisci quæ captamus. At Paulus Christum non modo non quærebat, sed etiam crudelissime persequebatur." Vide Calvinum in loc.

imputation of the righteousness of another unto them."\*
Where, now, either in the preceding, or in any other passages of holy writ, shall we find our author's doctrine, respecting "the necessity of a sinner's exercising virtue, antecedent to his justification, and in order to it?" Where, in the oracles of God, is that union with Christ, which constitutes the proper ground of his righteousness being imputed to us, represented as arising from the exercise of our own virtue? Or where, in the inthe exercise of our own virtue? Or where, in the inspired volume, do we perceive any thing said, about the hearts of sinners being united to Christ, previovs to faith in him, and justification by him? Nay, our author himself seems to contradict this, by elsewhere saying; "he who believeth not in Christ, is not so united to him and in him, as that his merit and righteousness, may be properly imputed to him, or reckoned to his account. The son of God, who is equal with God, and is God—is ready to pardon and save all that come unto him; to which all, even the most guilty and vile, are freely invited."†

"They, whom our Lord invites and whom the gos

"They, whom our Lord invites, and whom the gospel encourages to believe in him, are described as laboring under a burden; as thirsty, and so on." True: but must we consider that burden, or this thirst, as the mark of a gracious change having taken place in their hearts; as an holy qualification for acceptance with Christ; or as authorising them to believe in him? If so, the gospel, as already proved, should be preached to none but those who are born of God—that are, to a considerable degree sanctified—that are already in the way to heaven; and those who are, in scripture, denominated sinners, have no encouragement. Whereas, our Lord's commission was; preach the gospel, or proclaim the glad tidings, to every creature: and his invitation is, come, and take freely—without money

and without price.

<sup>\*</sup> Doctrine of justification, Chap. XVIII. † Two Discourses, pp. 15, 91, 92.

The burden which is here meant, by our compassionate saviour, seems to be no other than guilt, oppressing the conscience; of which the awakened sinner labors to get rid, by means of his own devising: and the thirst, an earnest desire of happiness, in the attainment of such objects as cannot afford it. Now, a burden and a thirst of this kind are frequently experienced by those who are unregenerate, and far from having the least degree of holiness. Cain, for example, the first born of woman, felt that burden, and complained of it, as too heavy for him to bear; though he was and continued to he are present a continued to he are present as the continued to he are present as the continued to he are present as the continued to the continued and continued to be, an enemy to God. Judas, also, experienced the weight of that burden, to an intolerable degree; sunk under its pressure; and perished without remedy. † Whence it appears, that the deepest sense of guilt, and the most alarming apprehensions of eternal ruin, are, detached from other considerations, no evidence of love to God; no proof of sanctifying influence; nor any indication that the subjects of them owen has well observed, "some, finding this sense of sin, with those other things that attend it, wrought in them, in some measure, begin to think, that now all is well: this is all that is of them required. They will endeavor to make a life, from such arguments of comfort as they can take from this trouble. They think this a ground of peace, that they have not peace. Here some take up before conversion, and it proves their ruin. Because they are convinced of sin, and troubled about it, and burdened with it, they think it shall be well with them. But, were not Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, convinced of sin, and burdened with it? Did this profit them? Did it interest them in the promises? Did not the wrath of God overtake them, notwithstanding? So it is with many daily: they think their conviction is conversion; and that their sins are pardoned, because they have been troubled. For a soul to place

<sup>4</sup> Gen. iv 13.

the spring of its peace or comfort in any thing of its own, is to fall short of Christ, and take up in self. We must not only be justified, but glory in him also. (Isa. xlv. 25.) Men may make use of the evidence of their graces; but only as a medium to a farther end: not as the rest of the soul, in the least. And this deprives men's very humiliations of all gospel humility. True humility consists more in believing, than in being sensible of sin. That's the soul's great self-emptying and abasing: this may consist with an obstinate resolution to scramble for something upon the account of self-endeavours."\*

Is the heavy-laden sinner invited to Christ? it is, not as qualified by being burdened, but as guilty and perishing, that he must apply to the Saviour; taking all his encouragement so to do, from the testimony of God concerning Jesus. As to a thirst of happiness, it is natural to intelligent beings: nor does it seem possible for any creature to possess rational existence, without desiring its own happiness. But the divine oracles have informed us, that sinners may hunger for that which is not bread, and thirst for that which cannot satisfy.

Mr. TILLINGHAST, in answer to this objection, says: "when Christ bids those that are weary and heavy-laden come to him, doth it therefore follow, [that] he excludes all others? I grant, such are to come: and such are most backward and afraid to come, and therefore called. But doth it follow, therefore, that no other must come; and that these, and only these, are called? If a prince send forth [a] proclamation to a company of traitors, to come in, and he will pardon them; and because he knows that there are some few among them, that are so sensible of what they have done, and brought themselves into by their rebellion, that they will never come upon this general proclamation, but, for fear, will run away; he therefore sends particularly to these, by name, you, and you, who dare not come for fear of being hanged; come, I will pardon you, and you; doth it therefore follow, because,

<sup>\*</sup> On the hundred and thirtieth Psalm, p 62, 63.

they have a call, as it were by name, therefore now all the rest, who have a general call are excluded? So here. But this fain would I know, what is the state and condition that souls are then in, when they are thus weary and heavy laden? Are they in the state and condition of sinners, or not? Righteous, or unrighteous? One [of these] they must be. If you say, they are not sinners, but righteous persons; then I ask, how came they [to be] thus? Is it by their being weary and heavy laden, barely? Or is it by their applying of the promise? If it be by their being weary and heavy laden, then what need you press them to come to Christ for justification; when as they have the same by this their qualification? If it be by applying the promise, or having it applied to them; then it will follow, that, notwithstanding this their qualification, that they are sinners, and so remain until they apply the promise, or have it applied to them."\*

Thus, Mr. Thomas Boston:—"the thirst mentioned

Thus, Mr. Thomas Boston:—"the thirst mentioned (Isa. lv. 1.) [must not] be restricted to a gracious thirst, a thirst after Christ and his rigteousness. For some, at least, of the thirsting ones, to whom the offer is there made, are spending money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. But it is evident, that sinners duly sensible, who are thirsting after Christ and his righteousness, are not spending their money and labor at that rate; but, on the contrary, for that which alone is bread, and satisfieth; namely, Jesus Christ, the true bread, which came down from heaven. Wherefore, the thirst there meant, must needs comprehend, yea, and principally aim at, that thirst after happiness and satisfaction which, being natural, is common to all mankind. Men, pained with this thirst, do naturally run, for quenching thereof, to the empty creation, and their fulsome lusts: and so they spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor, for that which satisfieth not; finding nothing

<sup>\*</sup> Six Treatises, pp. 67, 68. London, 1663.

there that can satisfy that their appetite, or thirst. As little is the solemn gospel offer (Matt. xi. 28.) restricted to a certain set of men endowed with some laudable qualifications, going under the name of laboring and being heavy laden: the which do, indeed, denote the restlessness natural to the sinful soul of man, spending its labor for that which satisfieth not. Our father Adam left his whole family with a conscience full of guilt, and a heart full of unsatisfied desires. Thus we naturally having a restless conscience, and a restless heart, the soul as naturally falls a laboring for rest to them. And it labors in the barren region of the fiery law, for a rest to the conscience; and in the empty creation, for a rest to the heart. But, after all, the conscience is still heavy laden with guilt,-and the heart is still under a load of unsatisfied desires. So neither the one, nor the other, can find rest indeed. This is the natural case of all men: and to souls thus laboring and laden, Jesus Christ calls that they may come to him, and he will give them rest: namely, a rest for their consciences, under the covert of his blood; and a rest to their hearts, in the enjoyment of God through him."\*
It has, with some degree of confidence, been demand-

It has, with some degree of confidence, been demanded; "whether, if sinners must not come to Christ as penitent, and as possessing an holy disposition; they are to believe in him, as impenitent, and as under the reigning power of their depravity?" But this, like some other objections, is not pertinent. For the question is, what is the proper warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus? Not, what is the state of his heart, in the moment when he first believes?—Or, if the objection did apply, it might be answered; neither as a penitent, nor as an impenitent sinner: but merely under the character of one that is guilty and perishing. It was for such that Jesus died: it is to such the tidings of salvation were addressed by the apostles: and, therefore, such are encouraged to believe in Christ. The objector might, consequently, with equal reason have asked;

<sup>\*</sup> Works, pp. 227, 228. See also, p. 845. Note.

whether, in a public ministry, salvation by the Redeemer should be exhibited to penitents, or to impenitents; to those that have some degree of holiness, or to those who have none? and then the answer would have been; to neither those, nor these, respectively as such: but to all of them, without exception, as deserving condemnation and final misery. Nor is there any reason to doubt, whether he to whom, by divine authority, salvation through Christ is preached, be warranted to believe in him.

It has been objected, "to assert that sinners, while destitute of holiness, are warranted to believe in Christ; is to maintain, that they are authorised to expect the felicity of heaven, while their native love of sin continues in all its force, and while they are hardened rebels against God." But there is a great and palpable dif-ference between persons, while in their native state, being authorised to believe in Jesus; and their being warranted, while in that condition, to expect final happiness. Yet this objection proceeds on a supposition, that whoever is encouraged by the word of grace to depend on Christ; is, at the very same instant, merely on the same ground, and while an unbeliever, equally authorised to expect everlasting life: which is a gross For he that believes in Christ, relies on him as justifying the ungodly: but he who, on scriptural grounds, hopes for future felicity, expects it as a believer; as in a justified state; as having a turn of heart, in some degree suited to the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Because, without holiness, no one shall see the Lord. Did Paul, for instance, believe in Jesus? it was under the consideration of himself, as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and the chief of sinners.\* Did he rejoice in hope? it was, as having received the atonement; † as bearing the image of Christ; and as having a spiritual relish for heavenly things. The sinner believes; the believer hopes. Nor can any man believe in Christ, and

<sup>\* 1</sup> Tim. i 13-15.

continue a rebel against God: for sovereign mercy, when it relieves the conscience, alters the bias of the heart, and forms the character anew. God, in the exercise and manifestation of pardoning grace to rebels, makes them his friends. Thus divine goodness leads to repentance, to holiness, and to hope of everlasting happiness. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.

"If he will maintain that the ungodly are warranted to believe in Jesus, there will be great danger of encouraging a superficial, Antinomian faith. Because guilty creatures, under the power of their depravity, are much more likely to approve the character of Christ, when represented as willing to receive the altogether unholy; than if he were considered as receiving none but those who are cordially disposed to perform the divine pre-

cepts."

That the sentiment for which I plead, may be prostituted to licentious purposes; and that, in certain instances, it probably has been so abused, will be admitted. But, be that as it may, Jesus must either be so exhibited in a public ministry, as to suit the character, the state, the circumstances of apostate creatures, or there is no gospel for them. Besides, the misapplication of any doctrine, affords no argument against, either its truth, or its importance: because the most excellent doctrines, and the plainest passages of scripture, have been frequently abused to execrable purposes.

This objection seems to imply, that a self-righteous turn of heart, and pharisaical pride, make no part of human depravity. For it apparently supposes, that there is little or no danger of sinners treating Christ with disrespect, except by considering him as the minister of sin: or, of their opposing the designs of divine grace, in any way, besides that of licentiousness. But it appears, from scripture, from experience, and from observation, that sinners are naturally and strongly inclined to seek justification by the works of the law;

that a violent propensity to cherish the notion of self-worthiness, is an essential part of their natural depravity; and that the disrespect with which Christ is generally treated by them, arises principally from that quarter. Yes, their low thoughts respecting the evil of sin, and the high opinion they form of their own character, are the chief source of that neglect with which they treat the divine Jesus, and of all their opposition to saving grace. Nay, so universal, and so predominant is this propensity to self-worthiness, that, for one who abuses the sentiment here defended, by converting it into an occasion of sin; ten thousand may be justly considered as dishonoring Christ, and as rebelling against God, under the pernicious influence of that principle which I oppose.

It is a great mistake to imagine, that ungodly men are so ready to adopt the sentiment for which I contend. Certain it is from the history of our Lord's ministry, and from the writings of Paul, that few things in the preaching, either of Christ, or of the apostle, were so offensive to persons of respectability among the Jews, as the doctrine which they preached, relative to pardon and acceptance with God. The discourses of Jesus, respecting divine grace, were extremely offensive to the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the reputedly devout in general. But, had the tenor of our Saviour's preaching, or of his converse among the people, been contrary to the principle here avowed; it is not supposable that the Jews would have so frequently complained of him, and objected against his conduct, as they did. Witness the following sayings: why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?—Behold—a friend of publicans and sinners!—Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?—This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner—This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them—They murmured saying, that he was gone to be guest

with a man that is a sinner.\* Now, it is evident, these murmurers and objectors were the reputedly devout; those who considered themselves, and were considered by others, as possessing virtuous dispositions and holy zeal: yet they were those to whom our Lord addressed himself in the following manner; verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots, the most profligate of both sexes, go into the kingdom of heaven before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe. †

Such was the treatment of Jesus, by the most respec-

table part of the public; and such was his language concerning those who, under the fair pretext of zeal for holiness, rejected his doctrine, and persecuted his person! With reference to whom, when arguing on their self-righteous principles in vindication of his own conduct, he spake three admirably gracious parables at the same time, which Luke has recorded. T Now, can it be supposed, with any appearance of probability, that the self-righteous Jews would have cast such reflections on the character of Christ, as a public teacher, if he had insisted on any degree of personal holiness, as previously necessary to faith in revealed mercy, as the only ground of acceptance with God! Had our Lord, in the course of his ministry, from time to time assured them, that every one must, prior to receiving his testimony of pardoning mercy and believing in him, be heartily disposed to keep the commands of God; they could not, with any shadow of reason, have raised such

a clamor against his doctrine and conduct.

That the ministry of Paul was perfectly consistent with the sentiment here defended, appears from those objections with which he meets, and from the answers which he returns. Thus, for example: some affirm that

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. ix 11 xi 19. Luke v 30. vii 39 xv 2. xix. 7. † Matt. xxi 31, 32. ‡ Luke xv.

we say, let us do evil, that good may come—do we then make void the law through faith?—shall we continue in sin. that grace may abound?—shall we sin, because we are not under the law. but under grace?\*—Such were the objections: and they imply, that, in the estimation of those who made them, the doctrine of Paul, implicitly, or by necessary consequence, vacated the authority of God in his law—that believers, being delivered from the law, as a covenant, or as prescribing the condition on which everlasting life is to be obtained, may safely continue in sin—that such continuance in the practice of sin, would illustrate the riches, and manifest the glory, of divine grace—and that, by accumulating moral evil, the highest good would be promoted.

To such various and formidable objections was the doctrine of Paul considered, by multitudes, as justly exposed! objections, however, which he repelled with abhorrence, and refuted with ease. But, could any person of common understanding, with the least appearance of propriety, have made these objections to the gospel which Paul preached, if he had taught, that an holy turn of heart, a disposition to perform the commands of God, or the exercise of virtue, is previously necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Jesus Christ for pardon and peace? Common sense, and a moment's reflection, forbid the thought. For, on that supposition, he must have laid the foundation of expecting any spiritual benefit from Christ, in the previous, personal holiness of every sinner who applies to him: which would have subverted the whole of his doctrine, respecting the justification of sinners before God. Has it been usual—I appeal to the intelligent reader—has it been usual, in modern times, for the doctrine of religious teachers to be charged with such consequences, or to be opposed by such objections; when it was notorious, that they firmly insisted on the necessity of every one exercising virtue, or possessing some degree

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. iii. 7, 8, 31. vi. 1, 15.

of true holiness, in order to warrant a reliance on Jesus Christ for pardon and acceptance? Was any teacher of religion ever charged with making void the law; or with implicitly saying, let us do evil, that good may come; by those who heard his discourses, or perused his writings, in which he maintained, that no sinner is authorised to believe in Christ, until he is disposed to observe the divine precepts? Surely not! or, if a fact, the objector's conduct must be considered as the effusion of mental imbecility, as a violent paroxysm of prejudice, or as the virulence of deliberate malice.

But if, on the contrary, we understand Paul as maintaining, that Christ with all his fulness of spiritual blessings, is free, perfectly free for the vilest; if we consider him as encouraging the chief of sinners, merely under the character of perishing wretches, to rely on Jesus for their immediate acceptance with God, and as giving them assurance that, in so doing, they shall not be disappointed; if we further consider the apostle as teaching, that the justification of sinners is merely, entirely, absolutely on the ground of our Lord's vicarious obedience imputed; then we perceive the true source of these objections. For that doctrine, in the eyes of all whose hearts are levened with legal pride, will ever be treated as an insult on moral virtue; as inimical to the divine law; and as having the most licentious tendency. The same doctrine, it is apparent is opposed by similar objections in our own times: but wisdom is justified of her children.

The principle for which I plead will be further confirmed, if we take into consideration those replies which the apostle made in defence of his doctrine. How, then, does he answer the unfounded and calumniating objections? Not by saying, "no: I never asserted, I never meant, that sinners may believe in Christ, for pardon and peace, before they are disposed to observe the divine precepts. I always taught, that they must love God, or be virtuously inclined to perform his will, before they can acceptably believe in Christ. But, instead

of replying in that manner, his answers are? It is a slanderous report; and the damnation of those who raised it is just—God forbid! yea, we establish the law—God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? God forbid! know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that though, before ye believed in Jesus, ye were the servants, or slaves, of sin; yet ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.\*

Here we see, that Paul repels and refutes the objecof those grounds on which some of them proceed; and by denouncing the judgment of God against all those who dared, out of hatred to evangelical truth, maliciously to slander the apostolic ministry. It should be observed, however, that the apostel does not give the least intimation of his doctrine having been misunderstood, relative to the movel, state of those whom he encountered relative to the moral state of those whom he encouraged to believe in Jesus, for the remission of sins, and acceptance with God. To prove that none can justly consider themselves as having already believed in Christ, except they be cordially disposed to holy obedience, his replies are pertinent and strong: but they do not in the least imply, that sinners must have some degree of holiness, or that they must exercise virtue, before they are warranted to believe in him. The want of observing this obvious distinction, seems to be the principal reason of that confusion which often attends the ideas of serious persons on this important subject; and of those mistakes into which they fall, relative to the true ground of a sinner's application to Christ, by which

their consciences are frequently so much embarrassed.

Once more: it may, perhaps, be objected; "the principle defended infers the doctrine of general redemption."

To this I answer, in the words of Dr. Owen. "Many

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. iii 8, 31. vi 2, 15, 16, 17.

disputes there are, whether Christ died for all indivi-duals of mankind, or no. If we say no, but only for the elect, who are some of all sorts: some then tell us, we cannot invite all men promiscuously to believe. But why so? We invite not men, as all men; no man, as one of all men; but all men as sinners: and we know that Christ died for sinners. But, is this the first thing, that we are, in the dispensation of the gospel, to propose to the soul of a sinner, under the law, that Christ died for HIM in particular? Is that the beginning of our message unto him? Were not this a ready way to induce him to conclude, let me then continue in sin, that grace may abound? No: but this is, in order of nature, our first work; even that we have had in hand. This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord. There is a way of reconciliation provided. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. There is a way of acceptance: there is forgiveness with him to be obtained. At this threshold of the Lord's house, doth the greatest part of men to whom the gospel is preached fall and perish; never looking in to see the treasures that are in the house itself; never coming into any such state and condition, wherein they have any ground or bottom to inquire, whether Christ died for them, in particular, or no? They believe not this report, nor take any serious notice of it. This was the ministry of the Baptist; and they who received it not, rejected the counsel of God concerning their salvation; and so perished in their sins. This is the sum of the blessed invitation given by wisdom: and here men stumble, fall, and perish. Luke vii. 10. Prov. ix. 1—5. i. 29, 30. \*\*\*

<sup>\*</sup> On the hundred and thirtieth Psalm, p. 250

#### CHAPTER. IV.

THE SALUTARY AND PRACTICAL TENDENCIES OF THE PRINCIPLE MAINTAINED.

The truth, as it is in Jesus, being the doctrine according to godliness,\* cannot but be adapted to practical purposes; and, therefore, must have a salutary influence on the hearts of all those who really believe it. Of this nature is the sentiment for which I plead; as, perhaps, may appear by the following considerations.

It has a natural tendency to humble self-righteous

It has a natural tendency to humble self-righteous pride by annihilating all distinctions among men, respecting the ground of their acceptance with God. Now this is perfectly agreeable to the genius of evangelical truth, and to the nature of Messiah's kingdom; as appears by the following prophetic oracle, relative to the ministry of John the Baptist, and the commencement of Gospel times. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh, on one common level, and without the least regard to difference of character, shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

As vain man would be wise, though born like a wild asses's colt; † so proud man would be righteous, though guilty before God, and obnoxious to ruin. If, however, the divine law be equitable, sinners are justly accursed; § and, if their condemnation be righteous, they cannot have the least hope, except through sovereign mercy. A small degree of difference from others, with regard to exterior character, is commonly considered, notwith-

<sup>+</sup> Eph. iv 21, 1 Tim. vi 3. Titus i 1. ‡ Job xi 12. \$ Gal. iii 10.

standing, as recommending to the favor of God, and as furnishing a ground of hope, through Jesus Christ. Now, in whomsoever this persuasion prevails, the gospel is understood as directing all the relief it reveals, to the qualified, the virtuous, the worthy: not the guilty, the vile, and the wretched. It is considered, therefore, not as adapted to humble the proud heart, and to relieve the pained conscience; but as maintaining a proper distinction between different characters, and as paying a just regard to human worth. While, consequently to multitudes, who think themselves comparatively righteous, it ministers food for self-importance; it leaves others, who consider themselves as the chief of sinners, without the least foundation of hope. The principle, however, for which I contend, has a directly contrary tendency: for, in prophetic language, it levels mountains, and elevates valleys. Or, in the words of our Lord, it abases those that are exalted, and exalts those that are abased.\* Because it maintains, that there is the very same ground of encouragement, and to an equal degree, for men to believe in Jesus, whether they be esteemed moral, or profligate; pious, or profane.

It is most happily suited to relieve those who are held in the snare of despondency, by forbidding despair in the vilest wretch that lives. Many there are, we have reason to think, who, having, for a long course of time, violated the dictates of conscience, by indulging their worst propensities; having, in multiplied instances, acted contrary to friendly advice, to their own resolutions, promises, vows; and having, perhaps, been the manifest occasion of ruin to various others; implicitly say, with those in the prophet, there is no hope: no; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go.† Thus, in a kind of sullen despair, they harden their consciences; in order to enjoy, for a while, the pleasures of sin, without control, and without remorse. Perceiving no reason for hope, they endeavor to discard

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxiii 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii 14. † Jer. ii 25.

fear. Having no conception that there is forgiveness with God, for persons in their situation; or that such enormous offenders may find acceptance through Jesus Christ; they rush on to final ruin. For, where there is no hope of escaping evil, there are no efforts to guard

against it.

The doctrine for which I plead, is, however, adapted to break the destructive snare, by exhibiting a ground of hope. Yes, the gracious gospel, considered as a complete warrant for the ungodly to believe in Jesus, encourages the most profligate, and the most criminal, to regard the atonement of Christ as allsufficient. "There is not," as one observes, "a more effectual remedy [against despondency,] than the consideration of the freeness of the grace of God in Christ and the promises: which are not made to such as deserve mercy, but to such as want it; not to righteous persons, but to sinners; not to the whole, but to the sick. Of all the ways and experiments to bear up a sinking spirit, there is no consideration like this, that from the beginning to the end of our salvation, nothing is primarily active but free grace. This is a firm bottom of comfort against the guilt of the most bloody and crimson sins: because free grace is not tied to any rules: it may do what it pleases."\* It belongs, indeed, to the very nature of grace, properly so called, to be absolutely free and sovereign, in all its bestowments: for where there is desert, whether intrinsic or pactional, the operation of grace necessarily ceases, and, if rectitude prevail, that of equity takes place.

It is admirably fitted to excite hope and produce comfort in those who, though not sunk in despendency, are deeply distressed by a sense of guilt, of depravity, and of unworthiness. Are the consciences of men alarmed, by a conviction of sin, and an apprehension of deserved wrath for past offences? Are sinners, being acquainted with their own hearts, conscious of strong

<sup>\*</sup> Dr. Spurstowe's Wells of Salvation Opened, pp. 50 51.

propensities to evil, and of numerous criminal imperfections attending their best performances? they consider themselves as altogether vile. Discerning nothing in their hearts, nor any thing in their lives, which deserves the name of holiness; but, on the contrary, much that seems to mark them out for destruction; they have nothing to remove their painful fears, or to relieve their burdened consciences, except what the gospel says concerning divine mercy, as manifested in Jesus Christ. He being revealed, however, as perfectly suitable to their wants, and as completely free for their acceptance; they are presented, by sovereign grace, with an all sufficient saviour for their immediate dependence. Confiding in the testimony of God as true, and receiving the provision of his grace as a free gift; they find relief, and enjoy peace. Nor does the comfort obtained arise from reflecting on the manner in which they believe, but from that grace which the gospel reveals, and from the all sufficiency of Jesus in whom they trust.

It is of great importance to the real Christian, in times of spiritual darkness and of discouragement. Has he, by the power of indwelling sin, or through the force of satan's temptations, lost that peace which arises from a view of interest in Jesus Christ? Is he incapable of approaching God with a filial confidence, crying, Abba, Father? he recurs to this truth, as the first spring of his encouragement, and, under the character of a sinner, applies to Christ afresh. It being fixed in his mind, as a leading principle of revealed truth, that the most ungodly are authorised to believe in Jesus; and that no degree of previous holiness is necessary for that purpose; he cannot, even in his worst condition, but consider himself as within the verge of that encouragement. As, therefore, it is by faith in Christ that he derives hope; and as, under the influence of hope, spiritual endeavors are excited; so, in this procedure, not only peace of conscience, but prayer

and watchfulness, brotherly love and self-denial, communion with God and heavenly mindedness, are promoted.

Besides, under the practical influence of this principle he will not be so liable to deceive himself, with regard to his real state in the sight of God; by inferring his regeneration from any religious impulses which he has felt, or from any starts of devotional affection which he may experience. No: he will be disposed to form a conclusion, respecting his general character, in the estimate of omniscience, from the habitual regard which he pays, to the atonement, the authority, and the example, of Jesus Christ. For though it must be admitted, that every real christian is lead by the spirit of God;\* and though, by the word of truth, that divine agent produce, excite, and maintain devout affections in the soul; yet we ought never to consider substantial evidence of true godliness, as arising from secret impulses, however strong; nor from transient flashes of religious affection, be they ever so high: but from the general frame of the heart, respecting the glorious God, as revealing himself in Jesus Christ.

It is of great moment in the Christian's daily walk with God. The reason is, it has a powerful tendency to promote an habitual regard to the word of grace and the atonement of Christ, as the only source of spiritual peace. The christian, being conscious of daily contracting fresh guilt, considering his transgressions, and his numerous imperfections in religious duty, as attended with peculiar aggravations, arising from his knowledge of the divine will, the blessings he enjoys, the profession he makes, and the character he bears; it is only by an habitual dependence on the atonement of Christ, that peace is maintained in his conscience, and that he feels the operation of evangelical motives to obedience. This, if I mistake not, is perfectly congenial to that grand maxim of inspiration; the just shall

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. viii 14.

live by faith: \* shall derive all his peace, and perform all his obedience, through faith in the atoning blood, the gracious doctrines, the precious promises, and the

superintending providence, + of Jesus Christ. ±

It leads to holy obedience, and furnishes with cogent motives to the performance of it. Paul, when exhorting servants to adorn the doctrine of God our saviour, says; the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, without exception, as to national distinction, or moral character; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.\* On this very interesting passage, Mr. Hervev thus paraphrases and remarks: "The grace of God; his infinitely free favor, -which scorns to be shackled with conditions, or meanly dependent on human endeavors-this grace, requiring nothing of the creature, but bringing salvation, spiritual and eternal salvation, finished by the incarnate Creator, and free for the chiefest of sinners -this grace, being revealed in the gospel, being discerned by faith, and thus appearing in lustre, and with power, to all men-to men of every rank, every age, every character; making no difference between the servant and his master; between the ruddy stripling and the hoary sire; between the vile prostitute and the chaste vestal; but opening its inexhaustible stores, to be received by one as well as the other—this grace,

+ Hab. ii 4. Rom. i 17. Gal. iii 11. ii 20.
 † Matt. xxviii. 18. Eph. i 22. 1 John v 4. Heb. xi passim.

The following words of Calvin deserve regard. "Fidei fundamentum facimus gratuitum promissionem, quod in ipsa proprie, fides consistat. Tametsi enim Deum per omnia veracem esse statuat, sive jubeat, sive prohibeat; sive promittat, sive minetur, jussa ctiam ejus obedienter excipiat, interdicta, observet, ad minas animadvertat; proprie tamen a promissione incipit, in ipsa constat, in ipsam definit. Vitam enim in Deo quærit, quæ non in mandatis, aut pænarum edictis, sed mirsericodiæ promission reperitur, eaque nonnisi gratuita quoniam conditionalis, qua ad opera nostra remittimur, non aliter vitam promittit, quam si perspiciamus esse in nobis sitam. Ergo, nisi fidem tremere ac vacillare volumus, illam sallutis promissione fulsiamus oportet: quæ a Domino ultro ac liberaliter, potiusque miseriæ nostra quam dignitatis respectu offeratur." Institut. L. III. Chap. ii § 29. § Titusii 11, 12.

does what? Cause Antinomianism, or practical ungod-liness, to come in with a full tide? Quite the reverse. It represses it like an immoveable barrier. It teaches us to deny, to renounce ungodliness, all ungodliness: not only external, gross abominations, but wordly lusts also; every vicious inclination, and every irregular desire. Farther, it teaches us to live soberly, with regard to ourselves; righteously, towards our neighbors; and godly to our Creator.

The original word is particularly beautiful and significant. It is not τασσει prescribeth, by way of rule; nor επιτασσει enjoineth, by way of authority; but παιδευουσα teacheth, by way of instruction; pointeth out the effectual method of obeying the precepts, and conforming to the rule. A tyrant may command his slave to write, or make a proficiency in writing. A kind tutor forms him to it; shows him how to do it; and renders what would otherwise be an irksome, perhaps, an impracticable task, both easy and pleasant. So this grace, clearly manifested in the understanding, and cordially apprehended by the will, renders every duty of holiness both practicable and pleasant: it gives us a heart, and a hand, and ability, to exercise ourselves unto universal godliness."\*

godliness."\*

Dr. Owen, when directing sinners to regard that forgiveness which is with God, as the first source of their encouragement, says; "This is the only way and means to enable you to obedience, and to render what you do therein acceptable unto God. It may be, that some of you are under the power of convictions, and have made engagements unto God to live unto him, to keep yourselves from sin, and to follow after holiness. It may be, you have done so in afflictions, dangers, sicknesses, or upon the receipt of mercies: but yet you find that you cannot come unto any stability, or consistency, in your course. You break with God and your own souls, which fills you with new disquietments; or \*Eleven Letters to Mr. J. Wesley, p. 179, 180.

<sup>\*</sup> Eleven Letters to Mr. J. Wesley, p. 179, 180.

else hardens you, and makes you secure and negligent: so that you return unto your purposes no oftener, than your convictions, or afflictions, befal you anew. This condition is ruinous and pernicious, which nothing can deliver you from, but this closing with forgiveness. For, all that you do without this, however it may please your minds, or ease your consciences, is not at all accepted with God. Unless this foundation be laid, all that you do is lost. All your prayers, all your duties, all your amendments, are an abomination to the Lord. Until peace is made with him, they are but the acts of enemies, which he despiseth and abhorreth. You run, it may be, earnestly; but you run out of the way: you strive, but not lawfully, and shall never receive the crown. True gospel obedience is the fruit of the faith of forgiveness. Whatever you do without it, is but a building without a foundation; a castle in the air. You may see the order of gospel obedience, Eph. ii. 7—10. The foundation must be laid in grace; riches of grace, by Christ, in the free pardon and forgiveness of sin. From hence must the works of obedience proceed, if you would have them to be of God's appointment, or find acceptance with him. Without this, God will say of all your services, worship, obedience, as he did the Israelites of old, (Amos v. 21-25.) I despise all: reject it all: it is not to him, nor to his glory. Now, if you are under convictions of any sort, there is nothing you more value, nothing you more place your confidence in, than your duties: your repentance, your amendment: what you do, and what in good time you will be. Is it nothing unto you, to lose all your hopes and all your expectations, which you have from hence? To have no other reception with God, than if all this time you had been wallowing in your sins and lusts? Yet thus it is with you, if you have not begun with God on his own terms; if you have not received the atone-ment, in the blood of his son; if you are not made partakers of forgiveness, if your persons are not pardoned, all your duties are accursed.

This alone will give you such motives and encouragements unto obedience, as will give you life, alacrity, and delight in it. You perform duties, abstain from sins; but with heaviness, fear, and in bondage. Could you do as well without them, as with them; would conscience be quiet, and hope of eternity hold out; you would omit them forever. This makes all your obedience burdensome; and you cry out in your thoughts, with him in the Prophet; behold, what a weariness it is! The service of God is the only drudgery of your lives; which you dare not omit, and delight not to perform. From this wretched and cursed frame, there is nothing that can deliver you but this also ing with for form. From this wretched and cursed frame, there is nothing that can deliver you but this closing with forgiveness. This will give you such motives, such encouragements, as will greatly influence your hearts and souls. It will give you freedom, liberty, delight and cheerfulness, in all duties of gospel obedience. You will find a constraining power in the love of Christ therein: a freedom from bondage, when the Son truly hath made you free. Faith and love will work genuinely and naturally in your spirits; and that which was your greatest burden, will become your chiefest joy. (2 Cor. vii. 1.) Thoughts of the love of God, of the blood of Christ, or the covenant of grace, and sense of pardon in them, will enlarge your hearts, and sweeten all your duties. You will find a new life, a new pleasure, a new satisfaction, in all that you do."\*

It is perfectly consistent with the necessity of true holiness, to constitute the Christian character, and to evidence the Christian faith. Does any one ask, what

holiness, to constitute the Christian character, and to evidence the Christian faith. Does any one ask, what is my warrant for believing in Jesus Christ? The answer is, not any thing done by you, not any thing wrought in you; but the word of grace, or the testimony of God concerning Jesus. If the question be, what is the evidence of my having believed in Christ, as justifying the ungodly? regard must be had to the prevailing turn of your heart, respecting the riches of his \*On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 262, 263, 264.

grace, the all sufficiency of his work, and the plenitude of his authority: an habitual approbation of which, constitutes evidence to a person's own conscience of real faith in him. If the question be, what is necessary to render a profession of that faith credible to others? then the answer is, as faith worketh by love, and as faith without works is dead; so a profession of faith in Jesus, not attended with fruits of love to his name, is entirely vain: and all pretences of love to Christ, without obedience to his commands, are equally futile. For thus it is written, If ye love me, keep my commandmentshe that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me--if any man love me, he will keep my words—he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings -- this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments-this is love, that we walk after his commandments -he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.\* Carefully to distinguish, between that which authorises our believing in Jesus, and that which evidences our faith in him, is of the highest importance. Because, maintaining that holiness is previously necessary to the former, savors of self-righteousness, intrenches on the honors of divine grace, and embarrasses the awakened conscience: while it is evident, that a denial of its utility, respecting the latter, contradicts the assertions of inspiration, verges upon licentiousness, and tends to Antinomianism.

Relative to these particulars, to some articles of christian experience, and to the state of unconverted sinners; I shall conclude the whole with various extracts from Dr. Owen. Thus, then, that judicious author: "our foundation in dealing with God, is Christ alone; mere grace, and pardon in him. Our building is in and by holiness and obedience; as the fruits of that faith by which we have received the atonement. And great mistakes there are in this matter, which bring

<sup>\*</sup> John xiv 15. 21, 23, 24. 1 John v 3. 2 John 6. +1 John ii 4·

great entanglements on the souls of men. Some are all their days laying the foundation, and are never able to build upon it, unto any comfort to themselves, or usefulness to others: and the reason is, because they will be mixing with the foundation stones, that are fit only for the following building. They will be bringing their obedience, duties, mortification of sin, and the like, unto the foundation. These are precious stones to build with, but unmeet to be first laid to bear upon them the whole weight of the building. The foundation is to be laid, as was said, in mere grace, mercy, pardon in the blood of Christ. This the soul is to accept of, and to rest in, merely as it is GRACE; without the consideration of any thing in itself, but that it is sinful and obnoxious unto ruin. This it finds a difficulty in, and would gladly have something of its own to mix with it. It cannot tell how to fix these foundation stones, without some cement of its own endeavors and duty: and because these things will not mix, they spend a fruitless labor about it all their days. But, if the foundation be of grace, it is not at all of works: for, otherwise, grace is no more grace. If any thing of our own be mixed with grace in this matter, it utterly destroys the nature of grace; which, if it be not alone, it is not at all. But doth not this tend to licentiousness? Doth not this render obedience, holiness, duties, mortification of sin, and good works, needless? God forbid! yea, this is the only way to order them aright unto the glory of God. Have we nothing to do, but to lay the foundation? yes, all our days we are to build upon it, when it is surely and firmly laid. And these are the means and ways of our edification. This, then, is the soul to do, who would come to peace and settlement. Let it let go all former endeavors, if it have been engaged unto any of that kind: and let it alone receive, admit of, and adhere to mere grace, mercy, and pardon; with a full sense that, in its self, it hath nothing for which it should have an interest in them, but that all is

of mere grace, through Jesus Christ. Other foundation can no man lay. Depart not hence, until this work be well over. Surcease not an earnest endeavor with your own hearts, to acquiesce in this righteousness of God, and to bring your souls unto a comfortable persuasion that God, for Christ his sake, hath freely forgiven you all your sins. Stir not hence, until this be effected. If you have been engaged in another way; that is, to seek for an interest in the pardon of sin, by some endeavors of your own; it is not unlikely but you are filled with the fruit of your own doings: that is, that you go on with all kind of uncertainties, and without any kind of constant peace. Return, then, again hither: bring this foundation work to a blessed issue in the blood of Christ; and, when that is done,

up and be doing.

You know how fatal and ruinous it is, for souls to abuse the grace of God, and the apprehension of the pardon of sins, in the course of their obedience to countenance themselves in sin, or the negligence of any duty. This is to turn the grace of God into wantonness, as we have elsewhere at large declared. And it is no less pernicious, to bring the duties of our obedience; any reserves for them; any hopes about them, into the matter of pardon and forgiveness, as we are to receive them from God. But these things, as they are distinct in themselves, so they must be distinctly managed in the soul : and the confounding of them, is that which disturbs the peace, and weakens the obedience of many. In a confused manner, they labor to keep up a life of grace and duty; which will be, in their places, conjoined, but not mixed or compounded. First, to take up mercy, pardon and forgiveness, absolutely on the account of Christ; and then to yield all obedience in the strength of Christ, and for the love of Christ, is the life of a believer."\*

<sup>&</sup>quot;They that believe forgiveness in a due manner be\* On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 300, 301, 302.

lieve it for the ends and purposes for which it is revealed of God. If God reveals any thing for one end and purpose, and men use it quite unto another; they do not receive the word of God, nor believe the thing revealed, but steal the word, and delude their own souls. Let us then weigh, to what end and purposes this forgiveness was first revealed by God; for which also its manifestation is still continued in the gospel. We have showed before, who it was to whom this revelation was made, and what condition he was in, when first it was made unto him. A lost, wretched creature, without hope or help, he was: how he should come to obtain acceptance with God, he knew not. God reveals forgiveness unto him, by Christ, to be his all. The intention of God in it was, that a sinner's ALL should be of grace. (Rom. xi. 6.) If any thing be added unto it, for the same end and purpose, then grace is no more grace. Again, God intended it as a new foundation of obedience, of love, and thankfulness. That men should love, because forgiven; and be holy, because pardoned, as I have showed before; that it might be the righteousness of a sinner, and a spring of new obedience in him, all to the praise of grace, were God's ends in its revelation."\*

"Self-condemnation and abhorrency do very well consist with gospel justification and peace. Some men have no peace, because they have that, without which it is impossible they should have peace. Because they cannot but condemn themselves, they cannot entertain a sense that God doth acquit them. But this is the mystery of the gospel, which unbelief is a stranger unto. Nothing but faith can give a real subsistence unto these things, in the same soul, and the same time. It is easy to learn the notion of it, but it is not easy to experience the power of it. For a man to have a sight of that within him, which would condemn him, for which he is troubled; and, at the same time, to have a discovery of that without him, which will justify him, and to rejoice therein; is that which he is not led unto, but by faith in the

<sup>\*</sup> On the hundred and thirtieth psalm, p. 239.

mystery of the gospel. We are now under a law for justification, which excludes all boasting, Rom. iii. 27. So that though we have joy enough in another, yet we may have, we always have, sufficient cause of humiliation in ourselves. The gospel will teach a man to feel sin, and believe righteousness, at the same time. Faith will carry heaven in one hand, and hell in the other; showing the one deserved, the other purchased. A man may see enough of his sin and folly, to bring Gehennam é Cælo, a hell of wrath out of heaven; and yet see Christ bring Calum ex Inferno, a heaven of blessedness out of an hell of punishment. And these must needs produce very diverse, yea contrary effects and operations in the soul: and he who knows not how to assign them their proper duties, and seasons, must needs be perplexed. The work of self-condemnation, then, which men in these [painful exercises] cannot but abound with, is, in the disposition of the covenant of grace, no way inconsistent with, nor unsuited unto, justification, and the enjoyment of peace, in the sense of it. There may be a deep sense of sin, on other considerations besides hell. David was never more humbled for sin, than when Nathan told him it was forgiven: and there may be a view of hell, as deserved; which yet the soul may know itself freed from, as to the issue-a deep sense of the evil of sin, of the guilt of [a] man's own sin, is no way inconsistent with gospel assurance of acceptance with God through Christ, and of forgiveness in him. By a sense of the guilt of sin, I understand two things; a clear conviction of sin, by the Holy Ghost saying unto the soul, thou art the man: and a sense of the displeasure of God, or the wrath due to sin, according to the sentence of the law-deep sorrow for sin is consistent with assurance of forgiveness: yea, it is a great means of preservation of it. Godly sorrow, mourning, humiliation, contriteness of spirit, are no less gospel graces, and fruits of the Holy Ghost, than faith itself; and so are consistent with the

highest flourishings of faith whatever. It is the work of heaven itself, and not of the assurance of it, to wipe all tears from our eyes. Sorrow, absolutely exclusive of the faith of forgiveness, is legal, and tendeth to death. Assurance, absolutely exclusive of godly sorrow, is presumption, and not a persuasion from him that calleth us. But, gospel sorrow, and gospel assurance, may well dwell in the same breast, at the same time. Indeed, as in all wordly joys there is a secret wound; so, in all godly sorrow and mourning, considered in itself, there is a secret joy and refreshment. Hence it doth not wither and dry up, but rather enlarge, open, and sweeten the heart. I am persuaded, that, generally, they mourn most who have most assurance. All true, gospel mourners, will be found to have the root of assurance so grafted in them, that, in its proper season (a time of trouble) it will undoubtedly flourish.

A deep sense of the indwelling power of sin, is consistent with gospel assurance. Sense of indwelling sin will cause manifold perplexities in the soul. Trouble, disquietments, sorrow, anguish of heart; expressing themselves in sighs, mourning, groaning for deliverance, always attend it. To what purpose do you speak, to a soul highly specified of the restless power of industrial soul highly sensible of the restless power of indwelling sin, concerning assurance? "Alas," saith he, "I am ready to perish every moment! My lusts are strong, active, restless, yea outrageous: they give me no rest, no liberty, and but little success do I obtain. Assurance is for conquerors; for them that live at rest and peace. I lie groveling on the ground all my days, and must needs be uncertain what will be the issue." But when such an one hath done all he can, he will not be able to make more woful complaints of this matter, than Paul hath done before him, Romans the seventh: and yet he closeth the discourse of it with as high an expression of assurance, as any person needs to seek after.\* It is not assurance, but enjoyment, that ex\* Rom. vii 24. viii 1. cludes this sense and trouble. But, if men will think they can have no assurance, because, they have that, without which it is impossible they should have any, it is hard to give them relief. A little cruise of salt of the gospel, cast into these bitter waters, will make them sweet and wholesome. Sense of the guilt of sin, may consist with faith of its pardon and forgiveness in the blood of Christ. Godly sorrow may dwell in the same heart, and the same time, with joy in the Holy Ghost: and groaning after deliverance from the power of sin, with a gracious persuasion, that sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace."\*

Known holiness, is apt to degenerate into self-righte-ousness. What God gives us, on the account of sanc-tification, we are ready enough to reckon on the score of justification. It is a hard thing to feel grace, and to believe as if there were none. We have so much of the Pharisee in us, by nature, that it is sometimes well that our good is hid from us. We are ready to take our corn and wine, and bestow them on other lovers. Were there not in our hearts a spiritually sensible principle of corruption; and in our duties a discernable mixture of self; it would be impossible we should walk so humbly with God in a covenant of grace and pardoning mercy. It it a good life, which is attended with a faith of righteousness, and a sense of corruption .--Oftentimes, holiness in the heart is more known by the opposition that is made there to it, than by its own prevalent working: the spirit's operation is known by the flesh's opposition. We find a man's strength by the burdens he carries, and not the pace that he goes. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? is a better evidence of grace and holiness, than, God I thank thee, I am not as other men. A heart pressed, grieved, burdened, not by the guilt of sin only, (which reflects with trouble on an awakened

<sup>\*</sup> Ut su ra, pr. 279,—283.

conscience) but by the close adhering power of in-dwelling sin, tempting, seducing, soliciting, hindering, captivating, conceiving, restlessly disquieting; may from thence have as clear an evidence of holiness, as from a delightful fruit-bearing. What is it that is trou-bled and grieved in thee? What is it, that seems to be almost killed and destroyed; that cries out, complains, longs for deliverance? Is it not the new creature? Is it not the principle of spiritual life, whereof thou art partaker? I speak not of trouble and disquietments for sin committed; nor of fears and perturbations of mind, lest sin should break forth to loss, shame, ruin, dishonor; nor of the contending of a convinced conscience, lest damnation should ensue; but of the spirit against sin, out of a hatred and a loathing of it, upon all the mixed considerations of love, grace, mercy, fear, the beauty of holiness, excellency of communion with God, that are proposed in the gospel. If thou seemest to thyself to be only passive in these things; to do nothing, but to endure the assaults of sin; yet if thou art sensible, and standest under the stroke of it as under the stroke of it as under the stroke of an enemy, there is stroke of it, as under the stroke of an enemy, there is the root of the matter. And as it is thus, as to the substance and being of holiness, so it is also as to the degrees of it. Degrees of holiness, are to be measured more by opposition, than self-operation. He may have more grace than another, who brings not forth so much fruit as the other; because he hath more opposition, more temptation: and sense of the want of ALL, is a great sign of somewhat in the soul. It is certain, whilst we are in the flesh, our duties will taste of the vessel whence they proceed. Weakness, defilements, treachery, hypocrisy, will attend them. To this purpose, whatever some pretend to the contrary, is the complaint of the church, Isa. lxiv. 6. The chaff, oftentimes, is so mixed with the wheat, that corn can scarce be discerned. And this know, that the more spiritual any man is, the more he sees of his unspiritualness in

his spiritual duties. An outside performance will satisfy an outside christianity. Job abhorred himself most, when he knew himself best. The clearer discoveries we have had of God, the viler will every thing of SELF appear. Nay, further, duties and performances are oftentimes very ill measured by us; and those seem to be first, which indeed are last; and those to be last, which indeed are first. I do not doubt but a man, when he hath had distractions to wrestle withal; no outward advantage to further him; no extraordinary provocations of hope, fear, or sorrow, on a natural account, in his duty; may rise from his knees with thoughts that he hath done nothing in his duty but provoked God: when there hath been more workings of grace, in contending with the deadness cast on the soul by the condition that it is in; than when, by a concurrence of moved natural affections, and outward provocations, a frame hath been raised that hath, to the party himself, seemed to reach heaven: so that, it may be, this perplexity about duties, is nothing but what is common to the people of God, and which ought to be no obstruction to peace and settlement."\*

"Take heed of spending time in complaints, when vigorous actings of grace are your duty. Fruitless and heartless complaints, bemoanings of themselves and their condition, is the substance of the profession that some make. If they can object against themselves, and form complaints out of their own conditions, they suppose they have done their duty. I have known some who have spent a good part of their time, in going up and down from one to another with their objections and complaints. These things are contrary to the life of faith. Yet some, I fear, may please themselves in such a course, as if it had somewhat of eminency in religion in it. Others, it may be, drive the same trade in their thoughts, although they make not, outwardly, such complaints. They are conversant, for the most part,

<sup>•</sup> On the hundred and thirtieth Psalm, pp. 343-345.

with heartless despondings: and, in some, they are multiplied by their natural constitutions, or distempers. Examples of this kind occur unto us every day. We must say, then, unto such heartless complainers, as God did to Joshua, get you up: why lie you thus upon your faces? Do you think to mend your condition by wishing it better, or complaining it is so bad? Are your complaints of want of an interest in forgiveness, a sanctified means to obtain it? not at all. You will not deal so with yourselves in things natural or civil. In such so with yourselves in things natural or civil. In such things you will take an industrious course for a remedy, or for relief. In things of the smallest importance in or for relief. In things of the smallest importance in this world, and unto this life, you will not content yourselves with wishing and complaining. As though industry, in the use of natural means, for the attaining of natural ends, were the ordinance of God; and diligence in the use of spiritual means, for the obtaining of spiritual ends, were not! Do you use diligence, study, endeavors, all diligence; diligence at all times, in all ways by God appointed; all manner of diligence, within and without, in private and public, to this end and purpose? Do you study, meditate, pray, watch, fast, neglect no opportunity, keep your hearts, search, try, examine yourselves, fly temptations, and occasions of cooling, deadening, and stifling grace? Do these things abound in you? Alas, you cannot do thus; you are so weak, so indisposed. But, alas, you will not; you will not part with your ease; you will not crucify your lusts; you will not use all diligence: but must come to it, or be contented to spend all your days in darkness, and to lie down in sorrow.

"Thus do men frequently miscarry. Is it any news

"Thus do men frequently miscarry. Is it any news for persons to bewail the folly of their nature and ways, in the morning and evening; and yet scarce stand upon their watch any part of the day, or in any occasion of the day? Is this giving all diligence? Is this working out our salvation with fear and trembling? And may we not see professors, even indulging to them
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selves in ways of vanity, folly, wrath, envy, sloth, and the like; and yet complain at what a loss they are, how unquiet, how uncertain? God forbid it should be otherwise with you! or that we should endeavor to speak peace unto you, in any such a frame! To hear of a person, that he walks slothfully, carelessly, or indulgeth his corruptions; and to find him complaining, that he is at a loss, whether he have any interest in pardon, or no; to give, or tender, comfort to such mourners, without a due admonition of their duty to use diligence, in the use of means, for to help on their deliverance out of the condition wherein they are, is to tender poison unto them. Spiritual peace and sloth, will never dwell

together in the same soul and conscience.\*

Men living under the *profession* of religion, and not experiencing the *power*, virtue, and efficacy of it in their hearts; are, whatever they profess, very near to Atheism; or, at least, exposed to great temptations thereunto. If they profess they know God, but in works deny him, they are abominable, and disobedient, and, unto every good work, reprobate. Let such men lay aside tradition and custom; let them give up themselves to a free and rational consideration of things; and they will quickly find that all their profession is but a miserable self-deceiving; and that, indeed, they believe not one word of the religion which they profess. For, of what their religion affirms to be in themselves, they find not any thing true, or real. He that professeth the gospel, avows that the death of Christ doth crucify sin; that faith purifieth the heart; that the Holy Ghost quickens, and enables the soul, unto duty; that God is good and gracious unto all that come unto him; that there is precious communion to be obtained with him, by Christ; that there is great joy in believing. These things are plainly, openly, frequently insisted on in the gospel. Hence the apostle presseth men unto obedience, on the account of them; and, as it were, leaves them at liber-

<sup>+</sup> Ut Supra, 362, 363, 306, 307.

ty from it, if they were not so. Philip. ii 1, 2. Now, if men live long in the profession of these things, saying that they are so, but indeed find nothing of truth, reality, or power in them; have no experience of the effects of them, in their own hearts or souls; what stable ground have they of believing any thing else in the gospel whereof they cannot have an experience? A man professeth that the death of Christ will mortify sin, and subdue corruption. Why doth he believe it? because it is so affirmed in the gospel. How, then, doth he find it to be so? Hath it this effect upon his soul, in his own heart? Not at all: he finds no such thing in him. How, then, can this man believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, because it is affirmed in the gospel; seeing that he finds no real truth of that which gospel; seeing that he finds no real truth of that which it affirms to be in himself? So our Saviour argues, John iii. 12. Of all dangers, therefore, in profession, let professors take heed of this; namely, of a customary, traditional, or doctrinal owning such truths, as ought to have their effects and accomplishment in themselves, whilst they have no experience of the reality and efficacy of them. This is plainly to have a form of godliness, and to deny the power thereof: and of this sort of men do we see many turning Atheists, scoffers, and open apostates. They find, in themselves, that their open apostates. They find, in themselves, that their profession was a lie; and that, in truth, they had none of those things which they talked of. And to what end should they continue longer in the avowing of that which is not? Besides, finding these things which they have professed to be in them, not to be so; they think, that what they have believed of things that are without them, are of no other nature, and so reject them altogether."\*

"Men live in sin, and therefore they do not believe forgiveness of sin. Faith in general purifies the heart. Our souls are purified in obeying the truth; and the life is made fruitful by it. Faith worketh by works,

<sup>\*</sup> Ut Supra, pp. 157-159.

and makes itself perfect by them: and the doctrine concerning forgiveness, hath a special influence into all holiness.\* No man can, then, believe forgiveness of sin, without a detestation and relinquishment of it—all that own the gospel must acknowledge this principle; the real belief of the pardon of sin, is prevalent with men not to live longer in sin. But now, what are the greatest number of those who pretend to receive this truth? Are their hearts purified by it? Are their consciences purged? are their lives changed? Dot they deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts? Doth forgiveness teach them so to do? Have they found it effectual to these purposes? Whence is it, then, that there is such a bleating, and bellowing,† to the contrary amongst them? Some of you are drunkards, some of you swearers, some of you unclean persons, some of you liars, some of you worldly, some of you haters of all the ways of Christ, and all his concernments upon the earth: proud, covetous, boasters, self-seekers, envious, wrathful, backbiters, malicious praters, slanderers, and the like. And shall we think, that such as these believe the forgiveness of sin? God forbid! derers, and the like. And shall we think, that such as these believe the forgiveness of sin? God forbid! Again; some of you are dark, ignorant, blind, utterly unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel; nor do at all make it your business to inquire into it. Either you hear it not at all; or, negligently, slothfully, customarily, to no purpose. Let not such persons deceive their own souls. To live in sin, and yet to believe the forgiveness of sin, is utterly impossible. Christ will not be a minister of sin, nor give his gospel to be a doctrine of licentiousness, for your sakes. Nor shall you be forgiven, that you may be delivered to do more abominations.† God forbid!

If any shall say, that they thank God, they are no such publicans as those mentioned: they are no drunkards, no swearers, no unclean persons, nor the like; so

<sup>\*</sup>Acts xv 19. 1 Pet. i 22. James ii 22 Titus ii 11, 12. † 1 Sam. xv, 14. ‡ Jer. vii 10.

that they are not concerned in this consideration: their lives and their duties give another account of them:" then, yet consider further, that the Pharisees were all that you say of yourselves; and yet the greatest des-pisers of forgiveness that ever were in the world; and that because they hated the light, on this account, that their deeds were evil. And for your duties, you mention, what, I pray, is the root and spring of them? Are they influenced from this faith of forgiveness, you boast of, or no? May it not be feared, that it is utterly otherwise? You do not perform them because you love the gospel, but because you fear the law. If the truth were known, I doubt it would appear, that you get nothing by your believing of pardon, but an encouragement unto sin. Your goodness, such as it is, springs from another root. It may be, also, that you ward yourselves by it against the strokes of conscience, or the guilt of particular sins. This is as bad as the other. It is as good to be encouraged unto sin, to commit it; as be encouraged under sin, so as to be kept from humiliation for it. None under heaven are more remote from the belief of grace and pardon, than such persons are."\*
"Consider, [ye unconverted and thoughtless crea-

"Consider, [ye unconverted and thoughtless creatures!] that you are sinners, great sinners, cursed sinners. Some of you, it may be, worse than innumerable of your fellow sinners were, who are now in hell. God might long since have cast you off everlastingly, from all expectation of mercy, and have caused all your hopes to perish; or, he might have left you alive and yet have refused to deal with you any more. He could have caused your sun to go down at noon-day, and have given you darkness instead of vision. He could respite your lives for a season, and yet swear in his wrath, that you should never enter into his rest. It is now otherwise; how long it may be so, nor you, nor I, know any thing at all. God only knows what will be your time, what your continuance. We are to speak

<sup>\*</sup> Ubi supra, pp. 237, 238.

whilst it is called to-day; and this is that, for the present, which I have to offer unto you; God declares that there is forgiveness with him; that your condition is not desperate, nor helpless. Some of you, it may be, are old in sins, and unacquainted with God; some of you, it may be, have been great sinners, scandalous sinners; and some of you, it may be, have reason to apprehend yourselves near the grave, and so also to hell; some of you, it may be, have your conciences disquieted and galled; and it may be, some of you are under some outward troubles and perplexities, that cause you a little to look about you; and some of you, it may be, are in the madness of your natural strength and lusts: your breasts are full of milk, and your bones of marrow, and your hearts of sin, pride, and contempt of the ways of God. All is one; this word is unto you all; and I shall only mind you, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. You hear the voice, or read the words of a poor worm; but the message is the message, and the word is the word, of Him who shaketh heaven and earth. Consider, then, well what you have to do: and what answer you will return unto him who will not be mocked."\*

"If you are, then, resolved to continue in your present condition, I have no more to say unto you. I am pure from your blood, in that I have declared unto you the counsel of God in this thing; and so I must leave you to a naked trial between the great God and your souls at the last day. Poor creatures! I even tremble to think, how he will tear you in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver! Methinks, I see your poor, destitute, forlorn souls; forsaken of lusts, sins, world, friends, angels, men; trembling before the throne of God full of horror, and fearful expectation of the dreadful sentence. Oh! that I could mourn over you whilst you are joined to all the living; whilst there is yet hope: Oh, that in this your day, you knew the things of your peace!"†

\* Ubi supra, p. 244, 248, 249. † Ibid.

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